

## Hesse, dissenting member of sexuality task force, speaks out

by Betsy Carlson  
WordAlone editor

A member of the Task Force for Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Studies on Sexuality issued short statements in mid-February to *The Lutheran* magazine, *Solid Rock Lutherans* and a longer version to WordAlone on his dissent to the task force's "Report and Recommendations."

Task force member Louis M. Hesse's full written comments on his dissent appear at the end of this article.

He called dissenting position one in the report his "minority report." Hesse spoke to WordAlone in two separate interviews about the task force's report and its Feb. 18-20 meeting in Chicago. He is a pig and corn farmer from Moses Lake, Wash.

"I have no qualms with my position's being known. It's a matter of personal integrity. This is where I'm at and if you [somebody doesn't] don't like it, I'll discuss it with you [them]," he said. In his dissent, he urged maintaining current standards and policies and disciplining those who violate them.

The majority of the task force, on the other hand, recommended the ELCA 1) preserve unity, 2) continue following a 1993 Conference of Bishops stance to support homosexuals in relationships with pastoral care, 3) keep current Vision and Expectations standards for rostered lay and ordained ministers while not disciplining those individ-

uals or churches who violate the standards.

Hesse commented, "There's kind of an amazement among many members of the task force that there are segments of the church that aren't going to go along with the recommendations we proposed as what would be best for the church."

Hesse said Feb. 22 that he and his associates on the task force were, "all pretty exhausted," from the three years of work they put in on their report and recommendations, released in January.

He said the task force plans to ask the churchwide Church Council and the ELCA Division for Church in Society for more time to research and write their next assignment, a social statement on human sexuality. The church was expected to consider the social statement in 2007.

He stated: "Personally, I think we should cancel the social statement work and just go with the social statements of our previous church bodies. I really dread trying to write a new one and deal with the changing mores that some of the task force members would recognize.

"It's like Pandora's Box. If we open it, where will we be able to stop?"

Hesse said a summary presented to the task force at its February meeting showed 105 pieces of correspondence were received, either by email or as *(Continued on page 12)*

## Youth Encounter announces 2006 national youth event

Youth Encounter has announced its first national youth event, EDGE!, which is scheduled July 7-11, 2006, in Nashville, Tenn.

The Rev. Dr. Larry Dean Johnson, president of Lutheran Youth Encounter, said recently: "My hope is that this event will strengthen the church to be faithful, vibrant, and growing. The event can demonstrate the vitality and the effectiveness of our confessional heritage.

"The event can influence the church to bring the counter-cultural message of the Scriptures to society rather than having the church adopt the values of the culture."

Lutheran Youth Encounter is a non-profit religious organization of the Lutheran tradition engaged in youth and mission ministry. The organization does most of its ministry in the United States under the banner of Youth Encounter. Over the past three years, Youth Encounter has served 2,900 congregations in the United States, including one out of six ELCA congregations and one out of eight LC-MS congregations.

Johnson explained that the possibility of doing a national youth event first occurred to him as he was reflecting on ways that Youth Encounter might best serve the church in its present situation.

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Jaynan Clark Egland: President,  
Mark C. Chavez: Director, Betsy Carlson: Editor  
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"I wondered if Youth Encounter might make a significant contribution to the church by offering an evangelical and confessional event—as Lutherans have traditionally understood those terms. To check out my idea, I contacted 30 church leaders I respect, and heard them say that such an event was both a worthy and potent idea.

"Then I called 100 pastors I thought might be interested in such an event, and discovered that most were eager to encourage their youth to participate. So I concluded that Youth Encounter should produce the event," said Johnson.

"The pastors with whom I visited desire an event through which Jesus Christ might transform young people, enable them to live their lives according to the Scriptures and equip them to serve others in Christ's name. Pastors desire to help young people deal with the ongoing assaults upon Christian faith and morals that they receive in school, in society and even from within the church," he said.

"As you know, the ELCA and the LC-MS sponsor national youth gatherings. These gatherings serve about one-third of their respective congregations. Youth Encounter's national youth event is intended to serve additional congregations and to support the present gatherings in effective ministry based on a traditional interpretation of the Christian Scriptures and Lutheran confessions."

Rev. TJ Anderson, a new Youth Encounter vice president, will plan and implement this national youth event and hopefully many more. He is an accomplished youth minister with 25 years of experience. For more information contact TJ by phone 1-800-659-6884, ext. 8448; email [tj@youthencounter.org](mailto:tj@youthencounter.org); mail 3490 Lexington Ave. N., St. Paul, Minn. 55126. Information is also on the web at [www.youthencounter.org](http://www.youthencounter.org).

## ELCA sexuality task force lists 'concern for conscience'

by Pastor Steve Thorson  
Taylors Falls, Minn.

*(Editor's note: The Task Force's Report and Recommendations are at [www.elca.org/faithfuljourney/tureport](http://www.elca.org/faithfuljourney/tureport)*

*Additional responses to the task force report are also available. Dr. Dennis Biefeldt, a WordAlone Board member and Theological Advisory Board member, has an essay, 'Sex and 'Church,' posted on the Journal of Lutheran Ethics, at: <http://www.elca.org/scriptlib/dcs/jle/article.asp?aid=530>*

*Alan Wisdom, vice president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, has a response, 'Lutheran Sexuality Task Force Abdicates Responsibility,' posted at: <http://www.ird-renew.org/News/News.cfm?ID=1036&c=4>*

In the Report and Recommendations from the ELCA task force on sexuality (p.10 of 32) "the task force members came to recognize that the biblical-theological case for wholesale change in this church's current standards has not been made to the satisfaction of the majority of participants in the study." At the same time, the report authorizes a "concern for conscience" that would allow synods and the churchwide organization to "refrain from disciplining" partnered gay and lesbian ministers and "those who call or approve partnered gay or lesbian candidates" even though this contradicts the "Vision and Expectations" standards for ministers in the ELCA.

What kind of a church will we become if "conscience" becomes our guide instead of Scripture? A "conscience" that is not informed or guided by God's Word can be worse than no conscience at all. It can be, and is regularly, deceived. I'm preaching a sermon series on the importance of know-

ing God's Word because it is so easy for us to be fooled. The Word of God must be our constant companion, the light and lamp without which we should not take a step to the left or to the right.

What does the Scripture say about conscience? The Hebrew word "heart" comes closest to conscience in the Old Testament. Jeremiah 17:9 says "the heart is devious above all else; it is perverse—who can understand it?" In the New Testament it is also clear that the conscience can become corrupted and perverse and evil (for example, Hebrews 10:22, "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water"). The conscience must be guided and led and not left on its own.

The following is from The New Bible Dictionary: "...It is possible for man's conscience—the faculty by which he apprehends the moral demands of God, and which causes him pain when he falls short of those demands—to be inadequately disciplined (1 Cor. 8:7), to become weakened (v. 12) and even defiled (v. 7; cf. Tit. 1:15), and to grow seared and ultimately insensible (cf. 1 Tim. 4:2). Thus it is essential for the conscience to be properly educated, and indeed informed, by the Holy Spirit. That is why 'conscience' and 'faith' cannot be separated. By repentance and faith man is delivered from conscience as 'pain'; but faith is also the means whereby his conscience is quickened and instructed. To walk in 'newness of life' (Rom. 6:4) implies a living, growing faith, through which the Christian is open to the influence of the Spirit (Rom. 8:14); and this in turn is the guarantee of a 'good', 'or, clear, conscience (1 Pet. 3:16; cf. Acts 23:1)...'" (Cont. on p. 5)

# It would be a change ... to local option

by Mark Chavez  
Director, WordAlone

When is, "no change," not no change? In the Report and Recommendations released in January by the Task Force for Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Studies on Human Sexuality.

The majority of the sexuality task force says, "our recommendations do not involve new policy or changes to existing policy." Anticipating that some might question the accuracy of that assertion, the "Frequently Asked Questions" appended to their report includes that very question and asserts the task force "is not proposing any changes." That may be true in the letter of the law, but not in the spirit because recommendation three changes enforcement of current denominational policies against ordaining gays in same-sex relationships.

"This church may choose to refrain from disciplining" those who violate current policy, says recommendation three.

Even Bishop Peter Rogness, Saint Paul Area Synod, said, "I hope we don't get mired in the discussion of whether this does or does not constitute policy change. It would be wrong to try and say there is no change. The policy of the church would be left intact, but the possibility for exceptions would be made explicit." St. Paul (Minn.) Pioneer Press, Jan. 14, 2005)

Bishop Rogness is correct. The churchwide assembly is "the highest legislative authority of the churchwide organization." (ELCA Constitution 12.11.) Vision and Expectations is just a policy document from the Church Council. Task force recommendation three, if approved, would formally give

permission to every synod and every church to disregard Vision and Expectations.

Whether the task force majority's recommendations call for change or not is significant. As *The Lutheran*, February 2005, reports, under the proposed rules for the churchwide assembly, "To the extent that the recommendations don't involve policy changes, they could be adopted by a simple majority . . ." (p. 48). Changes that are contrary to existing policy or social statements would require a two-thirds assembly vote to pass.

Bishop Rogness is honest about the implications of the task force's proposals: "If the third recommendation were accepted, some pastors already under discipline would likely be allowed to be rostered. The process would be done locally, in context." (*Metro Lutheran*, February 2005)

This local option, would be similar in effect to decisions made at The Episcopal Church USA 2003 General Convention—dioceses can ordain non-celibate homosexuals and parishes can bless same sex unions, even though their official policies prohibit it. The impact of the Episcopal decisions has been division in The Episcopal Church, and within the Anglican Communion.

I believe recommendation three would have the same impact on the ELCA — schism within and disruption of our relationships with other Christian denominations, especially, in our case, with other members of the Lutheran World Federation.

The task force paints its recommendations as a pastoral solution as opposed to a legislative one. It is not a "pastoral" way to preserve the unity of the denomination, but will in fact tear it apart. (*Continued on page 5*)

## ELCA sexuality task force (Continues from page 3)

How can we tell if our consciences are guided by the Holy Spirit? By all examining and comparing ours to the Word of God as recorded in the Bible. The Holy Spirit will not contradict the Scriptures because it is the Holy Spirit who inspired them in the first place (cf. ELCA constitution 2.02.c. and 2.03., John 16:13, 2 Cor. 4:13, 2 Pet. 1:21).

So then, if our consciences tell us one thing and the Scriptures tell us another, we must then surrender our consciences to the Lord as he is revealed in the Scriptures. It seems to me that the ELCA task force is wanting to do just the opposite in its report and recommendations, surrendering the biblical-theological case to conscience.

If the churchwide assembly approves the report and recommendations, the ELCA will put at risk the biblically informed conscience that caused Martin Luther to stand firm at the Diet of Worms! The rationale in Part Two of the report and recommendations (p. 11 of 32) quotes Luther, "it is neither right nor safe to go against conscience." But Luther adds something more, something very important, something the report doesn't choose to remember. Luther would surrender conscience (that is, recant) only if he were convinced by Scripture and plain reason.

Luther's conscience was informed, guided and held captive to the Word of God. The "conscience" of which the report speaks is not so informed, in my opinion.

## It would be a change...to local option (Continues from page 4)

What should the churchwide assembly do? Adopt dissenting position one in the task force report!

Task force member Louis M. Hesse of Washington state drafted a clear, simple, dissenting statement, position one, that affirms the present policies of the ELCA, the last social statements of the predeces-

As I mentioned above, the report admits that most of the study participants weren't convinced by the biblical-theological case that the current policies should be changed. But the report isn't satisfied with that verdict. It continues to try to make the case that there are significant doubts as to what the Bible says about marriage, family and sexuality.

On page p. 12 of 32 it refers back to the Background Essay on Biblical Texts. I studied the background essay and other parts of the "Journey Together" material with other pastors from our conference. I came to the conclusion that the essay, a central part of the "Journey Together" study material recommended by the ELCA, obscured what the Bible says clearly about the blessing of heterosexual marriage and family and the sin of sexual fulfillment outside of this boundary. Even so, among those who used the "Journey Together" material as their study guide, only 23.2% were convinced, either by the biblical-theological case or for some other reason, that the historic position of the church should be changed to allow the blessing of homosexual unions and the rostering of ministers involved in homosexual relations (p. 28 of 32).

Can we live together in one church while holding different positions on these issues? Absolutely. But when it comes to the official teachings and policies of our church body, these must be guided by the biblical-theological case. To do otherwise is neither right nor safe.

sor church bodies and keeps the ELCA's position consistent with the scriptures and most Christians worldwide.

A proposed memorial document for synod assemblies to act upon, which urges adopting dissenting position one, is available at: [www.wordalone.org/resources/resolutions/memorial\\_to\\_adopt\\_position\\_one.htm](http://www.wordalone.org/resources/resolutions/memorial_to_adopt_position_one.htm)

## Greater liability is one possibility

By Dr. Jeffray Greene  
Rantoul, Ill.

In preparation for the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Orlando this summer, the sexuality task force made three recommendations concerning standards for sexual conduct for rostered leaders and the blessing of homosexual unions. The first recommendation declares the issue is divisive and continued deliberation is needed. The second recommendation declares that we should continue with the 1993 Conference of Bishops call for pastoral care of persons in same-sex relationships.

Talking about the issue until one side capitulates will not resolve the issue.

The third recommendation is troubling. It calls upon the church to continue under the current standards of the church's Vision and Expectations, which prohibit the ordination of non-celibate homosexuals. Yet the recommendation says that the church "may choose to refrain" from disciplining gays and lesbians who are in relationships, but are ordained as well as to refrain from disciplining those who ordain them.

We cannot say one thing in our constitution and by-laws and do another by "recommendation." Are they recommending that some have the power to just wink at our own governing documents while flagrantly disobeying them? What kind of witness does that provide when we are making this recommendation for the sake of "ministry and outreach"?

There are inherent problems introduced through a non-policy that is a policy. If the ELCA declares that it is a constitutional church, then it must submit to constitutional principles. The corporate structure implied by declaring ourselves constitutional means that we do not invent how to use the constitution as we go along. There is a history of how a constitution is used in a corporate structure.

For instance, some might say that granting permission for exceptions to those who do not live up to Vision and Expectations is merely the same as the exception granted to those who are not ordained in the historic episcopate. It is not. The exception to opt out of the episcopate has been granted as a legislated act in a by-law change by a two-thirds assembly vote.

Consider that by declaring that no policy change is requested through this recommendation, a simple majority of the churchwide assembly is all that is required for approval. It's one step closer to what is desired by those who seek change without the obstacle of a two-thirds vote. By accepting this recommendation, a new policy is, in effect, established.

If we grant permission to set aside discipline, (as recommendation three does) we, in effect, grant to individual bishops the right to declare who is and who is not fit to serve as a rostered leader regardless of current, understood and accepted qualifications in Vision and Expectations. It can be argued that such a move means we are an autocratic church governed by the few who know what is best for all. Granting autocratic authority to bishops won't resolve the issue. This can have a chilling effect by opening us to a new level of liability.

A lesson can be learned from an autocratic organization: that the Roman Catholic Church is being held liable for the decisions of its leaders to be pastoral in dealing with the sexuality of its rostered leaders. Even though pastoral decisions were made, they were still liable for wrong decisions.

When a corporate structure defies its rules of governance, liability still remains in the eyes of the law. Also, we need to consider what a new policy of non-policy in the matter of discipline does to our ability to discipline when it is needed.

## 'All you need is love'... Does Antinomian Controversy ride again?



By Gary R. Jepsen  
Pastor of Pilgrim  
Lutheran Church  
Puyallup, Wash.

### Introduction

Some weeks ago my wife and I were invited to have dinner with a group of retired Evangelical Lutheran Church in America pastors and their spouses. The dinner conversation eventually drifted to the homosexuality issue facing the ELCA. We talked about our ordination vows and the commitment we pledged to the Confessions **and** to the Scriptures as the norms for the faith and life of the church. We talked about our call to proclaim faithfully the Gospel.

It was then that one of the retired pastors said something to the effect, "But, what is the Gospel, really, except the message of 'unconditional love'?" While granting that God's love is central to our proclamation (John 3:16), I said I wasn't comfortable reducing the Gospel to "unconditional love." Still, his comment stayed with me long after the evening was over.

In reflecting on that evening, I searched for a word to help me understand why I was so uncomfortable with that conversation and the attitudes being expressed. The word that came to mind was "antinomianism."

"Might it be said," I wondered, "the Antinomian Controversy rides again?"

### I. Background material

To refresh the reader's memory, the Antinomian Controversy is a name given by Reformation scholars to refer to the disagreement that arose between Luther and

Johannes Agricola. In fact, the word "antinomian" was first coined by Luther to refer to Agricola and his followers.

The word "antinomianism" comes from two Greek words:

- 1) ἀντι (*anti*) - meaning "instead of" or "opposite" and, in more modern times, it has the connotation of "against."
- 2) νόμος (*nomos*) - meaning "law", "rule" or "standard." In some cases it was used as a translation for the Hebrew word for religious law and tradition (Rom. 3:20). It carries the sense of "a rule of life or of moral conduct."

Although Agricola was not a libertine, antinomians like him were known to place an inordinate emphasis on "love." Law was seen by Agricola as hostile to grace, love and faith. F. Bente, in "Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord" (pp.161-169), writes: "'Antinomianism' means 'opposition to the Law.' Those who hold it think that the Gospel only and not the Law should be proclaimed."

Some of the earliest forms of Christian antinomianism go back to New Testament times — the various Gnostic heresies which at the time plagued the early church. The goal of Gnosticism, whether by extreme asceticism or hedonistic indulgence, was to come to true spiritual knowledge (*gnosis*) — an enlightenment superior to that of ordinary persons, which would put one beyond the need for law.

### II. Antinomianism and scripture

Although the word "antinomian" is not to be found in the New Testament, another similar word, namely, *anomos* (ἀνομος, an adjective meaning "lawless" or "without law," and its noun (Continued on page 8)

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(Continues from page 7) form, ἀνομία occurs more than 20 times. A few examples are:

- In Romans 6:19, Paul speaks of those who had yielded themselves to "iniquity" (ἀνομία).
- In Matthew 7:20-23, Jesus says to those who are ultimately rejected, "I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers (RSV)." The Greek word here translated "evildoers" is *anomia*, otherwise translated "ye that work iniquity" (KJV) or "you who practice lawlessness" (NKJV).
- The same analysis would apply to Matthew 13:41 where Jesus says, "The Son of man will send His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers" (*anomia*—RSV).

Thus, although the word "antinomian" *per se* does not appear in the New Testament, the word "*anomia*" appears frequently and its meaning is very similar to antinomianism. However, even more significant is the fact that "*anomia*" — lawlessness — is never referred to favorably in the New Testament and is in fact almost always condemned.

### III. Some applications

From the perspective of Luther, antinomianism arose out of an inadequate reading of the gospels. It was seen as a reading of scripture that missed the Law-Gospel tension, which was so essential to Luther's thought, because it focused only on a watered down sense of the gospel. For example, consider such passages as in Matt. 22 where Jesus teaches that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 2:37-39).

And then, of course, there is Romans 13 where the Apostle Paul writes, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore **love is the fulfilling of the law.**" (Emphasis mine -GRJ)

These are great passages! However they do not represent a full reading of the Gospels. For example, if one were to take passages like these in isolation, one might easily get the impression that love is all that is necessary. Like the Beatles of old we could all just sit around crooning, "All you need is love," and be done with it.

However, there are numerous problems with such a reduction of the gospel message, several of which are that:

1. love becomes fuzzy and sentimental having no real point of reference other than what the individual feels is right at the time;
2. feelings, such as feelings of love, are wonderful, but they are at best fickle and are easily manipulated by ego, sin and evil;
3. any real sense of brokenness, sin and evil is lost;
4. and thus there would be very little awareness of need for repentance, healing, redemption and salvation.

Similarly, Luther's teaching that the Christian is "at the same time saint and sinner" is lost. Likewise, the understanding that we as sinners constantly need confession, repentance, forgiveness and salvation would also be lost. James Nestingen summarizes as follows, "In the fifth Antinomian Disputation (theses 40 and 41), Luther argues from two poles: first, 'insofar as Christ is raised in us, so far are we without the law, sin, and death'; second, 'insofar as he truly is not yet raised in us, so far are we under the law, sin, and death.'"

For Luther (and St. Paul - Rom. 7:19-24), in this life, we are still under sin.

And so, the real tragedy of antinomianism is that the Gospel is ultimately lost. Without a profound sense for "sin, death and the power of the devil," from what does Christ save us? It is little wonder, therefore, that Luther's reaction to antinomianism, with its rejection of the law, was sharp and unyielding. The Gospel, in Luther's eyes, was in danger. "If we cast the Law aside," Luther said, "we shall not long retain Christ."

### IV. Antinomianism and Lutheranism

Thus, it is an interesting twist that Lutherans have often been accused of being antinomian, probably due to their heavy emphasis on the Pauline doctrine of "justification by grace apart from works of the law" (Rom. 3:28). Luther himself was puzzled by this accusation. He wrote: "It is most surprising to me that anyone can claim that I reject the Law or the Ten Commandments, since there is available, in more than one edition, my exposition of the Ten Commandments...."

Nevertheless, the accusation persists. And its potential validity is intensified by the fact that Lutherans, who fail to grasp Luther's carefully nuanced understanding of Law, often tend to fall into one of two errors: legalism or antinomianism.

Regarding the latter, an ELCA study, "Living the Faith: A Lutheran Perspective on Ethics," describes the phenomenon as follows: "Because of an over concern with legalism and works righteousness, and a failure to see the necessary use of the Law in the Christian life, Lutheran ethics has lost its moral substance. For all practical

purposes, some say, all we have left is a vague commandment to love others that can be filled with whatever content we want. The end result, says Lutheran theologian Reinhard Hutter, is a 'Protestant-lite' version of ethics that fails the Christian community with its lack of moral direction.... 'As a result, the argument goes, we are easily seduced by the over-emphasis on individualism in our society that sees freedom as a 'freedom from the Law'."

Granted that the ELCA study, "Living the Faith..." is here simply describing one side of the debate over Lutheran ethical deliberation, nevertheless, the potential critique is devastating!

### V. - A: Antinomianism and 'Journey Together Faithfully Part Two'

"...there is nothing new under the sun." (Eccl. 1:9) Ecclesiastes is undoubtedly true. However, the controversies that confront the church today, such as antinomianism, seldom come in exactly the same packaging as they might have in the past. Thus, with each new challenge, they need to be re-identified and

thought through anew.

So, the question that is before us is: has the ELCA study process via "Journey Together Faithfully" and its "Report and Recommendations" become for the ELCA what Agricola was for Luther — a new carrier, so to speak, of "the antinomian virus"?

Unless one is by nature a "rebel without a cause," it is doubtful that anyone intentionally sets out to be antinomian or a heretic. However, what can happen in heresies is that someone comes up with a valid insight (for example, Agricola was right in saying "love" was central (Continued on page 10)

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**"the real tragedy of antinomianism is that the gospel is ultimately lost. Without a profound sense for 'sin, death and the power of the devil,' from what does Christ save us?"**

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(Continues from page 9) to the Gospel) that is then coupled with ego (for example, the desire to be clever and ingenious in applying the insight). This leads to a distortion or even perversion of truth.

When an insight into the truth is exaggeratedly represented as the whole truth, truth itself is distorted and perverted!

### V. - B

As the introductory anecdote indicated, in some quarters the truth of the Gospel has been reduced to mere "love." As was indicated earlier, when that happens, love is thereby elevated to a prominence beyond its due and left without any clear context or point of reference (much like what happened with antinomianism in the past). "Living the Faith..." puts it this way, "...all we have left is a vague commandment to love others that can be filled with whatever content we want."

But in addition to "love," other words have joined the antinomian mantra, words like "unity," "tolerance" and the phrase, "God is doing something new." Space will not allow us to examine each of these words or phrases, but, consider the following from "Journey Together Faithfully" part 2: "Regardless of our different sexual orientations or views about sexual orientation and sexual conduct, our **unity** comes from Christ and his gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation." (Emphasis added)

Sounds great but how do we do that? On the surface, who could argue with the desire to be one as Christians? Who would want to stand against Jesus' prayer in John 17 (vv.11 and 22) And, who in theory could be against the notion of the church's being

united in mission? Nevertheless, similar to our earlier concerns about the misuse of "love," "unity" -- as used in "Journey Together Faithfully" and its report -- is:

1. without focus or a point of reference,
2. and an insight into the Gospel that is blown out of proportion and morphed into the whole Gospel.

Beyond that, one wonders how we are to find unity in Christ and mission when we go against the very order of creation that Jesus so plainly upheld. Jesus clearly affirmed God's order of creation when He asked, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female...?" He was thereby affirming the order of creation. So, how do we have unity in any real sense when some take His pronouncement seriously and others explain it away?

In John 8, a woman who had been caught in adultery was brought to Jesus. But notice, Jesus did not say, "Hey, it's no big deal. Love God and do what you want." No, He said, "Go, and sin no more" (Jn.8:2-11). In fact, throughout the Gospels, Jesus did not lessen God's demand for sexual morality, or any other kind of morality, He intensified it saying, "You have heard that it was said... But I say to you..." (Matt. 5:27f.).

So, the point is, one is hard pressed to conceive of what possible unity we might have in Christ when there are such radically different interpretations of Scripture. What unity might there be when one side takes Jesus' clear teaching seriously and the other cannot conceive that God might say "no" to anything they (Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10) might want to do in the name of "love" or "unity" as they understand the terms? What kind of unity is there when there is no clear consensus (due to modern interpretive methods) as to who Jesus actually is and what He saves us from? And, how can there be unity without common convictions (except for a unity so "vague... we can fill it with whatever content we want")?

A similar analysis might be offered with regard to what it means to speak of "tolerance." Do we tolerate what Scripture regards as intolerable? And how do we deal with the assertion, "God is doing a new thing" (Isa. 43:19)? Does Isaiah in context mean God is going against the very order He has established in creation or that He is going to re-establish that order? In short, is God a God of order or of confusion (1Cor.14:33)?

However, due to space constraints we must forego further analysis.

### VI. Concluding thought

Ken Myers, in "Same-Sex Marriage in Cultural Perspective," which was the introduction to an interview with Dr. Robert Gagnon on Volume 68 of the MARS HILL AUDIO Journal, has written, "...part of the mission of the Holy Spirit through the

Church is, as Jesus says in John 16, to tell the World that it is wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment."

However, Myers continues, there are also those in the church... "who reject the historic Christian teaching and who seem to believe that the World, as represented by its most self-consciously progressive institutions and thinkers, is ahead of the Church in ushering in the Kingdom of God, indeed that the World is right in telling the Church that it is wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment."

### **"Do we tolerate what scripture regards as intolerable?"**

If Myers' assessment is at all accurate, then there is in the church a clash of perceptions and, with such a clash, it is little wonder that, as Robert

Jenson put it, we are serving in a church that has lost its story.

For my part, it seems that antinomianism in the tradition of Johannes Agricola, who was at best well-intentioned but misguided, and at worst was driven by ego desire in order to be perceived as clever, rides again. In fact, the revisionists who stand behind "Journey Together Faithfully" and its report might be seen to stand solidly in the tradition of Agricola. If so, that does not bode well for the ELCA.

(Editor's note: This entire article along with references and endnotes can be found on WordAlone's website at: [www.wordalone.org/archives/articles\\_by\\_author/jepsen.htm](http://www.wordalone.org/archives/articles_by_author/jepsen.htm))

## WordAlone Network's Annual Convention

Sunday, April 17, 6 pm - Tuesday, April 19, 5 pm

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## Dissenting member speaks out (Continues from page 1)

letters. He noted that one piece of mail was a petition signed by 72 persons opposing the recommendations, as well as rostering ministers in same-sex relationships or blessing such relationships. When those 72 are added as individual responses, he said, the percentages showed that 13% responding supported the task force's recommendations, 70% opposed blessing or rostering persons in same-sex relationships, 8% opposed the recommendations for not going far enough in accepting blessing or rostering and 9% expressed no opinion.

Looking to the future for the task force, he said that to even begin a rough draft of a social statement is just not doable with the current deadline of January 2006. "The task force first will have to decide its approach to human sexuality," said Hesse. "Are matters of human sexuality a matter of personal responsibility to God and neighbor, or are they systemic — that is, a matter of something outside oneself, driving ones behaviors, either positively or negatively? Or a combination of the two?"

"Prior questions will have to be asked and answered. Things like what you believe about creation, what is the role of sexual-

ity in creation, what is God's intention around marriage and family life, about relationships? How do we define sin? Something we never could do in our work on the first recommendations."

Hesse said there is a variance among task force members about how serious the problem — the idolatry of sex—really is.

"Some would seem to imply that the level of idolatry we experience in our culture is new. It's nothing new in human history," he added. "The Canaanite culture revolved around sexuality. (People) are just rediscovering old things ... it's not new."

When asked if he thought the task force had been stacked in favor of making changes in church policy to allow ordination or licensing ministers in same-sex relationship and to bless such relationships, Hesse responded: "When has that not been true? Moses before Pharaoh; Jesus before the Sanhedrin; and Paul in Rome? My comment is, 'So what?'"

"The professionals should look out for the little guy because oftentimes God works through the little guy. I mean, that's scriptural! Can you think of anyone less likely for God to work through than a pig farmer?"

Ahab's quote above (speaking about the prophet Elijah) reminds us that sometimes the cause of Satan is served by pressing for unity above all in "our mission together."

**"No one would choose to be gay."**

One thing I have changed due to my involvement in the task force is that I no longer refer to gay expression as simply a matter of choice. This drives at the heart of a matter, which is very important to Lutherans and differentiates us to a certain extent from our brethren in the Evangelical and Catholic camps. Evangelicals and Catholics love to *(Continued on page 13)*

## Why I dissented (Continues from page 12)

talk about free will — sin is a matter of choices made or not made. Lutherans should talk about the bound will. We are in bondage to sin and bound to Christ — at the same time saint and sinner — *simul iustus et peccator*.

The gay community argues no one would choose to be gay, so it must be a created good. I do not choose to be prideful, envious, greedy, lustful, angry, gluttonous, or slothful (the seven deadly sins of Catholicism). Since I regularly engage in all of those behaviors, does that mean they are all good? No, it means, "I am in bondage to sin and cannot free myself." No one chooses to be an alcoholic, a drug addict, addicted to gambling, a nymphomaniac, a pedophile, or a hebephile, among many other things that the community frowns upon. Are these then good as well?

It is an awful big leap from not being a choice to being good. A leap I can't make.

**Pastoral Care: Is it "I'm OK, you're OK" or "I'm a sinner, you're a sinner, Jesus is Lord" ?**

In our self-centered therapeutic culture, pastoral care is evidently becoming that which makes one feel good about oneself. I'll be the first to agree that pastoral response is going to be far different to a person holding a gun, threatening suicide in a profound state of depression and despair, as opposed to a person living in a full state of denial claiming "all is well with my soul," but the rubrics of pastoral care and response must begin with the understanding that Jesus Christ died and rose for the sake of sinners. Law and Gospel are both required. Law, so we recognize the truth of who we are, fallen beings before a holy God; and Gospel, so we realize what God has done to deal with our fallenness. All else is simply denial and deceit.

**"Let your conscience be your guide."** -- Jiminy Cricket, or **"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life,"**

**and Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone."** -- Mark 10:17b-18

How do we decide what is good? Conscience matters a great deal to Lutherans, right? After all, it was "conscience bound to the Word of God" that Luther cited at Worms. The important part is *bound to the Word of God*, in my view. Please note Jesus' words cited in the story of the rich young ruler above. "No one is good but God alone." I have listened carefully for a place from scripture (God's Word) where God says gay expression is good. Everyone on the task force has agreed, "Scripture has nothing good to say about gay expression." God deals with his people through the Word. In the absence of a good word from God and the presence of a number of negative words from God, I am left saying this is not good.

**"I am a new thing."** -- Gene Robinson, among other gay advocates, or **"I make all things new."** -- Jesus Christ  
What is the "new thing" of scripture? The experience of new things in the Christian community has been fairly consistently a cry taken up by false prophets. I live in a Mormon community, so Joseph Smith comes to mind immediately. A personal claim to being a "new thing" from God strikes me as an ultimate claim of human hubris. In my mind, the new thing of the scriptural witness is that Jesus Christ has power over death. He brought people back from death and He himself rose from the dead. I think that is the last "new thing" worth paying attention to.

**"God don't make no Junk"** -- mantra of the 1970s

**"A weed is a plant out of place."** -- basic agronomy

The engineers who design a highway lay out the roads and then lay out the rules of the road — stop signs, do not pass stripes, wrong way signs, *(Continued on page 14)*

## Why I dissented (Continues from page 13)

one way signs, do not enter signs, speed limits, cornering speed recommendations, etc. The designer has in mind how things will go best and sets boundaries for his creation to best function as it is designed. It's all designed and planned with good intentions of helping people to get where they need to go. Problems arise when boundaries are violated. What was designed as a good thing suddenly results in death and destruction when someone decides to go the wrong way on a one-way street. One of the ways a person can recognize he is going the wrong way is by the death and destruction surrounding or impacting upon himself as he makes his journey.

While the analogy of a highway system is, of course, incomplete, much the same can be said for the functioning of God's creation. When things are not going according to design, parts of God's good creation suddenly have impacts they should not have, causing death and destruction. God created things like syphilis, gonorrhea bacteria, HIV, the viral agents that cause cervical and anal cancer, herpes virus, and numerous other agents which shouldn't be a problem if we would or could simply pay attention to His road signs (His will). We can't, (we sin) and we fall short (*hamartia*= sin), so we suffer the consequences, which God himself laments. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and one sign of our fallenness is the suffering inflicted upon us by agents in God's good creation. The severe mental, physical, and emotional health problems connected with gay expression and our current sexual mores should drive us to recognize we are going the wrong way, and it is time to turn around (repent).

### "Honor your Father and your Mother."

My paternal grandfather died when my father was three years old. My father was surrounded by loving people including a couple of caring uncles and many cousins,

but no one could replace his father's love and guidance. My father has acutely felt the pain from this loss for the past 72 of his 75 years. He has had a wonderful and blessed life, but one cannot truly know my father without recognizing this wound in his psyche. He has always stated to my mother and the rest of us that the most important thing to him was being a good father to his children. The most important thing a father can do for his children is love their mother.

It is simply a tragedy when a child is deprived of a mother's and/or father's love due to death, disease, divorce, or other dysfunction. This is a fundamental paradigm of healthy human community recognized by communities even beyond the Christian sphere.

I had a long conversation (among several such encounters) with a gay man in Issaquah, Washington. He and his "husband" have several adopted children. My final questions to him in our conversation were:

"What will your children know of a mother's love?"

"What will the children of a lesbian couple know of a father's love?"

The Judeo-Christian community has always declared this kind of deprivation tragic. Some faith communities believe it to be unimportant. The concept that both motherly AND fatherly love in a child's life are unimportant cannot be described as anything but wicked, in my opinion.

My final prayer for those who cannot see this is a calm reiteration of what must be among the holiest words of scripture:

**"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."**

With all due respect,  
Louis M. Hesse

Member, Task Force for ELCA  
Studies on Human Sexuality

# Lutheran Clergy Connect

Lutheran Clergy Connect is one way for congregations seeking a pastor to connect with potential candidates who believe that Christ alone is sufficient for the unity of the Church and that the Word of God is the authority for the Church. Below are the most recent listings. A full list, which includes 12 additional listings, is posted on the WordAlone website ([www.wordalone.org](http://www.wordalone.org)).

If you would like your congregation listed on Clergy Connect, please mail or fax your request on church letterhead, signed by an officer or call committee chair, to WordAlone Network, 2299 Palmer Dr. Suite 220, New Brighton, MN 55112 Fax: 651-633-4260. (Please notify us when the position's been filled.)

Give the following information:  
Pastoral position  
Congregation's name, city,  
& state (& website address  
if applicable)  
Contact person  
Phone number  
E-mail address

Calls are listed starting with the most recently received.

Trinity Lutheran Church

Sharon, ND

Contact: Keith Johnson

Call Committee Chair

RR 1 Box 24a

Sharon, ND 58277-0128

phone: 701-543-3907

*A full-time pastor to serve a two-point parish.*

Faith Lutheran Church

Hutchinson, MN

[www.faihlc.com](http://www.faihlc.com) and

[www.faiithongrove.com](http://www.faiithongrove.com)

Contact: Jim Schaefer, Call committee

co-chair: 320-587-3883 or

Karen Eckstrom, Call committee

co-chair: 320-587-7261

*A full-time co-pastor join our pastoral team who is skilled*

*and knowledgeable in developing and enhancing worship*

*(ranging from traditional to contemporary styles), with*

*strong personal communication skills (with co-pastors,*

*staff and various age groups*

*within the congregation), and who is well versed in Lutheran Theology and Doctrine.*

Rock Valle Lutheran Church  
Echo, MN

Contact: Larry Schueler

Congregation President

507-925-4473

*A full-time pastor to serve a two-point parish who supports the 10 Affirmations associated with WordAlone.*

Grace Lutheran Church  
Bountiful, UT

Contact: Melinda Williams

c/o Grace Lutheran Church

835 N. Main

Bountiful, Utah 84010

801-295-2251, ext 131

[mwilliams@davisclipper.com](mailto:mwilliams@davisclipper.com)

*A bi-vocational or full-time pastor who is open to the leading of the Spirit, & who can offer*

*Bible-based messages, leading to transformed lives, to*

*serve a small, but committed group of Christians, looking to*

*grow, both spiritually & numerically.*

Mount Olive Lutheran Church

Lake Havasu City, AZ

Contact: Ted Harris

Call Committee Chairman

928-855-3079 (w)

*3 Positions: Lead Pastor, an*

*Associate Pastor & a Youth &*

*Family Director*

*\*A full-time Lead Pastor, ELCA, who is passionate, high-energy*

*& can deliver Bible based messages that lead to transformed*

*lives, a visionary leader with a heart for prayer, worship,*

*discipleship & reaching out to community. Full range of ministry*

*to be shared with an associate pastor with focus on*

*small groups & a director of youth & family ministry.*

*\*A full-time Associate Pastor who will provide partnership*

*& support for the work of the Lead Pastor & provide leadership*

*& direction for small group ministries as well as supervision*

*for the director of youth & family programs.*

*\*A full-time Director of Youth & Family Ministry to ensure*

*the education for Youth that will lead them to develop in*

*Christlike maturity, equipping them for ministry in the church & the world.*

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, IA

Contact: David E. Neve

Call Committee Chairman

515-247-6579 (w)

515-276-4327 (h)

515-669-4269 (c)

[neve51@mchsi.com](mailto:neve51@mchsi.com)

*Senior Pastor*