

Orlando assembly sexuality issues revisited

by Betsy Carlson, editor

If ELCA members thought the questions of blessing same-sex relationships or ordaining practicing homosexuals as pastors had been decided at the 2005 churchwide assembly, and that those questions—and sexuality in general—weren't going to come up at the 2007 Churchwide Assembly because voting on a proposed social statement on sexuality was delayed until 2009, they were wrong.

Whether by accident or plan, those two disputes in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have recently received big pushes that likely will bring them before the 2007 assembly in Chicago in August.

The 2005 churchwide assembly passed a deliberately ambiguous statement on blessing same-sex relationships that allowed proponents and opponents of such blessings to interpret the vote as either outlawing the blessings or giving local option on doing the blessings. The assembly's action said that the ELCA would "continue to respect the guidance of the 1993 statement of the Conference of Bishops," which disapproved of a ceremony for the blessing of a homosexual relationship. (See: <http://www.elca.org/synods/bishopsblessings.html>) However, the approved statement also called for pastors and churches to provide pastoral care "for all to whom

they minister." The assembly defeated all attempts to clarify the statement as either approving or disapproving of blessings.

Immediately after the assembly, WordAlone Network President Jaynan Clark Eglund asserted that the assembly had seemingly ruled out such blessings while in reality had "propped the door open firmly" to allow the blessings in some synods.

The assembly also rejected a recommendation from the then-existing sexuality task force and ELCA Church Council to allow ordinations of pastors in same-sex relationships in certain cases.

When the 2005 assembly adjourned, delegates may have been left with the impression that issues surrounding homosexual behavior would be given a rest until 2009 because the ELCA Church Council had earlier agreed with the task force to lengthen the time for study and writing a social statement on sexuality until then.

However, that may not be the case because a hearing committee on the discipline of ELCA Pastor Bradley Schmeling, a practicing homosexual, announced its decision in early February. (See: http://www.elcas.org/Hearing/Decision_of_discipline_committee_-_signed.pdf) Both Schmeling

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and the bishop appealed the hearing committee ruling soon thereafter.

It is not known when the appeals committee will announce its final ruling. Both parties may file written responses and rebuttals. Once the final document is submitted, the appeals committee has 60 days to produce its written decision.

On first reading, the hearing committee decision seems to support present ELCA guidelines against allowing practicing

homosexuals to serve as pastors. Their decision calls for Schmeling to be removed from the ELCA roster a few days after this year's churchwide assembly.

But, the hearing committee suggests that some of the present guidelines are outside provisions of the ELCA constitution. The committee urges the 2007 synod assemblies to memorialize the churchwide assembly to act to eliminate provisions that prohibit practicing homosexuals from ordination or serving as pastors or professional lay ministers.

Schmeling serves an ELCA church in Atlanta, St. John's in Midtown, and told his bishop in March 2006 that he was living in a same-sex relationship. The bishop filed discipline charges, which led to a hearing in January.

The hearing committee stated the present ELCA guidelines are a "bad policy." The committee was composed of six ELCA leaders from the Southeastern Synod's discipline committee and six from the ELCA churchwide discipline committee. As specified in the ELCA constitution, Schmeling chose two of the six from the churchwide committee and the executive committee of the ELCA Church Council chose the other four.

If the policy were to be changed this summer, presumably Schmeling would not be removed from the ELCA clergy roster.

Also sure to bring discussion and attention to the dispute over homosexual behavior is a document received in the mail by leaders in the New England Synod the first week in February. That synod's council had approved the document in December 2006. In this document, "Guidance for Pastors and Congregations of the New England Synod, ELCA, Regarding the Blessing of Unions of Same-Sex Couples," (see: <http://www.nesynod.org/documents/blessing.pdf>) the New England Synod not only gives explicit approval to pastors and churches to do the blessings, but also pro-

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WordAlone Institute progress reported

by Dennis Bielfeldt, institute director

In May of 2006, the WordAlone Convention directed the WordAlone Board to implement the vision of an "autonomous, independent and fully accredited" Lutheran House of Studies employing the Biblical hermeneutic (interpretation) of the Lutheran Reformation."

We are pleased to report progress on this goal.

We now have this tentative **mission statement**: The WordAlone Institute shall:

- ✚ Prepare men and women to be pastors in the Lutheran confessional tradition.
- ✚ Provide confessional, theological, graduate education to future teachers of the Lutheran tradition.
- ✚ Provide quality continuing theological education for Lutheran pastors.
- ✚ Give pertinent theological educational opportunities to Lutheran lay people to grow and be enriched in the faith.
- ✚ Carry on an ongoing research program that seeks to link the Lutheran confessions to the present intellectual and cultural horizons, while yet providing excellent Biblical and confessional resources to congregations.

Our working **partnerships** continue to multiply. They now include

- ✚ Concordia University, Irvine, Calif.
- ✚ Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.
- ✚ Lutheran Bible Institute, Irvine, Calif.
- ✚ Mount Carmel Ministries, Alexandria, Minn.
- ✚ Calvary Lutheran Church, Golden Valley, Minn.

The WordAlone Institute shall partner with Concordia University to train future pastors in the Lutheran confessional tradition. Concordia University will offer the basic Master of Arts degree that will be the cornerstone of our pastor certification program. Fully interactive courses will originate from southern California and other locations for delivery at satellite sites as

well as to home computers. Our pastoral candidates will complete a "WordAlone Master of Arts track" with Concordia University, and will add other courses from WordAlone faculty to complete our "master of divinity equivalency." We hope to get American Theological Schools accreditation for our program down the road. We are designing a two-year field internship for our candidates where they shall receive the bulk of their "practical theology" courses.

The WordAlone Institute shall work closely with Lutheran Bible Institute to deliver quality faith enrichment courses for laity at designated satellite sites as well as to home computers. Mount Carmel Ministries will participate in this partnership as we deliver lay-oriented programming to the Mt. Carmel campus. LBI courses shall be accredited through Concordia University.

The Institute will also partner with Concordia Seminary in St. Louis to provide doctorates and other advanced degrees to our students. Plans call for a "WordAlone liaison" to be named at Concordia Seminary, a person who can help mentor WordAlone students through the doctoral process, as well as through the Master of Arts program. WordAlone faculty will participate materially in the education of WordAlone students at Concordia Seminary.

Finally, we are happy to announce that Calvary Lutheran Church will host the first course offering of the WordAlone Institute. James Nestingen and Steven Paulson will team up to teach "Scripture and Interpretation: A Confessional Hermeneutic for Preaching and Teaching" at Calvary Lutheran this fall.

We continue the task of finding and receiving gifts to implement our plans for the institute. Our hope is to use donations **directly** for faculty salaries and student scholarships **rather than** use them to build with traditional bricks and mortar. Donations designated for the institute can be sent directly to the WordAlone office in New Brighton, Minn. ♦

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Conflict over ordaining practicing gays heats up for Episcopal church, again

by Betsy Carlson, editor

With several mainline churches enmeshed in controversy over ordaining non-celibate homosexuals as ministers, priests or bishops, one of the denominational disputes about homosexual behavior comes to a boil somewhere in the United States on a fairly regular basis.

Two months ago, leaders (primates) in the worldwide Anglican Communion turned the heat up under The Episcopal Church in this country. These leaders issued a “communiqué” at a Primates Meeting in Tanzania Feb. 15-19 that set a deadline of Sept. 30 for the American church to clarify its stand and establish moratoriums on ordaining any more homosexuals who are in same-sex relationships and on blessing such relationships or face damaged relationships at best, and, possibly, expulsion from the Communion.

The American bishops responded with three statements from their House of Bishops meeting in Texas in March. They passed over the questions on sexual ethics and focused on a question of providing pastoral care for members who, like the majority of primates, are opposed to ordaining gays or lesbians in same-sex relationships.

The Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, however, took a broader view of the issues. In an address to the Church of England General Synod in late February, Williams reportedly said that when conflicts had passed a certain point, simple solutions were unlikely to work, to the same degree that the solutions “deliberately ignored” the things that had bred the conflict in the first place—and had never been properly addressed.

“This is a recipe for the whole thing to start up again as soon as possible,” he said. The matter of sexual ethics is not the only thing the controversy is about. Decision-making

in the church and the interpretation and authority of Scripture are what it was about. He further told the members of his diocese that what is needed was “a real theological exchange.”

“So in short, I am commending the primates communiqué, for all its inevitable imperfections, as representing a serious attempt to go beyond the surface problems and to give us some space to look at the underlying and neglected theological factors,” Williams said at the synod meeting.

The present controversy flared in 2003 after The Episcopal Church’s 2003 General Convention, when the House of Bishops approved ordaining Gene Robinson, a homosexual priest in a same-sex relationship, as bishop of New Hampshire. Then several Anglican leaders, mostly from provinces south of the equator, put a pressure cooker on the stove.

Some Anglican archbishops in Africa soon declared their relationships with The Episcopal Church broken or impaired after Robinson’s ordination. In the intervening years, leaders of the 38 Anglican provinces (national or regional groupings that make up the Anglican Communion), including the U.S.A., have met several times to discuss Robinson’s controversial ordination.

A majority have worked to get the American church to back off ordaining non-celibate homosexual bishops. There have been reports, statements, documents, an apology by the U.S. church and, in February, the Communiqué from the primates who met in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, but no solution.

Since 2003, though, relationships within The Episcopal Church have been broken more than they had been over the denomi-

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Two opposing theologies are in ELCA

by Mark C. Chavez, director

Physicians must diagnose the primary illnesses of their patients. Treating the patient’s symptoms is necessary, but if the physician does not treat the primary illness, the patient does not get well.

The WordAlone Network maintains that the primary illness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is the crisis over the authority of the Word of God in the life of the ELCA. The authority of Jesus the Christ and the authority of the inspired Word of God in the Bible are routinely called into question in one form or another throughout the ELCA.

The symptoms of the ELCA’s illness abound – steady decline in membership; the numbers of missionaries and new mission starts are less than half of what they were in 1988 when the ELCA began; divisive conflict over sexuality issues; ecumenical agreements that compromise key Lutheran teachings in multiple directions; pagan worship practices in some ELCA churches; lack of accountability to ELCA’s faith and standards; multiple gospels being proclaimed and the list goes on.

Some of the surface issues or symptoms get a lot of press in the ELCA. Some do not and are more hidden. The primary illness usually does not get much press, but here is an exception:

... [Presiding Bp. Mark] Hanson said: *Two “hermeneutics” or paradigms are at work among the members of the ELCA that make agreement difficult on scriptural and theological matters. The Rev. Craig L. Nesson, academic dean and professor of contextual theology, Wartburg Theological Seminary, an ELCA seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, writes that there is a “traditional approach” and a “contextual approach” in interpreting Scripture,*

both of which are valid and irreconcilable, Hanson told the bishops. Similarly, Dr. Marcus J. Borg, Department of Philosophy, Oregon State University, Corvallis, writes that there are two irreconcilable “paradigms” in which Christians differ in their understandings of the Christian tradition and their interpretation of Scripture, creeds and the confessions, he said. Hanson said he’s heard people with different understandings of Scripture and theology seeking to find a place for their views in the sexuality recommendations. (ELCA News Service, March 11, 2005)

I agree that there are two conflicting and irreconcilable positions in the ELCA. I disagree that they are both valid. The questioning of the authority of God’s Word in the ELCA results not from just two conflicting paradigms, but from two basic theologies in the ELCA. The theologies begin with opposite presuppositions and conflict with each other on almost all major teachings of the Christian faith. The table on page 7 illustrates the major differences.

There are more than two theologies in the ELCA, but all can be grouped under one of two general headings – confessional Lutheran or liberal Protestant. Confessional Lutheran includes at least a few distinguishable theologies or emphases. There are many more in the liberal Protestant grouping.

The dividing line between the two groups may not always be sharp – some ELCA members might say they are on both sides of the table depending on the particular teaching. In truth, liberal Protestant theology is one way that we sinners trap ourselves in idolatry – making the god that we want

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Two opposing theologies are in ELCA



Teaching	Confessional Lutheran	Liberal Protestant
Truth	Absolute and revealed by God	Contextual and discovered by humankind
Holy Bible	Sinners are the problem	The Bible is the problem
Triune God	Revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit	They create and imagine other names
Original sin	"Full of evil lust and inclination"	"God made me this way"
Son of God	Jesus – only name and way to God	Perhaps other names and ways to God
Holy Spirit	Comes in the external Word of God	Comes in internal word or experience
Law	Always demands righteousness of sinners	Most law no longer applies to people
Gospel	Does what the law can't, by grace	Nullifies the law
Resurrection	Physical – Jesus raised, body and all	Spiritual, metaphorical or mythical
Repentance	"Entire life . . . to be one of repentance"	Only parts of life call for repentance
Justification	Adam and Eve in us need to die	Adam and Eve in us free to live
Faith in Jesus	Necessary gift given by the Holy Spirit	Optional gift – Jesus is not the only way
Sanctification	Holy Spirit grants us holiness	Wholeness exists naturally in creation
Holy Baptism	God uses it to drown sinners and raise saints	Sinners use it as a membership card
Holy Communion	The Lord's Supper – Jesus hosts	Our banquet – humankind is the host
Church's mission	Make disciples, baptize and teach obedience	Work for social justice and peace
Kingdom of God	Coming from above and from the future	Building from below and from the present



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and think we need. If we are honest with ourselves and with God, then we have all embraced willingly the teachings of liberal Protestant theology in one form or another throughout our lives.

Most of the table would accurately describe the primary illness in other Protestant denominations in North America. Some Roman Catholics in North America also use a theology that is essentially liberal Protestant, though official Roman Catholic theology fits with most, but not all, of the confessional Lutheran teachings.

By the way, if you want to see the cutting edge of liberal Protestant theology, search on the Internet for "progressive Christianity." You'll quickly find names like Marcus Borg and other members of the Jesus Seminar – a group of mainly theologians who studied and wrote about an "historical Jesus," using strictly academic critical analysis of scientific and historical evidence without reference to faith or theological considerations. According to their writings, Jesus was an itinerant sage who dined with social outcasts and who was not resurrected from the grave. Or look at Ebenezer Lutheran Church's website, www.herchurch.org, for a specific ELCA church that is on the "cutting edge."

More teachings could be listed in the table to illustrate the differences between the two basic groups of theologies, but these are sufficient for a general description and diagnosis. Here are some brief comments on the different teachings using CL and LP as abbreviations for the two groups.

Truth: CL works with the presupposition that there are absolute truths and that God reveals them to sinners. Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life." LP asserts that truths are not absolute, but vary with context and personal experience. They search for them and when they discover them, they claim the Holy Spirit has inspired and led them to the discovery.

Holy Bible: CL sees the Bible as God's Word that says sinners are the problem. LP sees the Bible more as human words about God and therefore the Bible is a problem – ancient, hard to understand, addressed to different people and cultures and so on.

Triune God: CL accepts God's self-revelation as the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. LP sees problems with only one name for the Trinity (in particular "Father" and "Son") and believes they can create and imagine new names.

Original sin: CL holds to article II of the Augsburg Confession – apart from new birth in Christ we are "full of evil lust and inclination." LP says, "God made me this way and God doesn't make junk," thereby denying the need for a total new birth in Christ.

Son of God: CL boldly confesses Jesus as "the way" that sinners are brought by the Holy Spirit to God the Father. LP says there is more than one way to find and experience God. Jesus is only one of the ways. Some go so far as to say that everyone will be saved, which is known as universalism.

Holy Spirit: CL confesses that the Holy Spirit comes to sinners by means of God's external Word – Jesus Christ and Scripture – that exists outside of and apart from sinners. LP separates the Holy Spirit's work from the external Word and says that the Spirit uses internal human words and experiences to reveal new truths.

Law: CL confesses that God's law, revealed in the Bible, demands righteousness of sinners until the end of time. LP says that most of the law in the Bible is outmoded and no longer applies to anyone.

Gospel: CL confesses that the Gospel of Jesus gives what the law demands – righteousness. The Gospel fulfills the law. LP says that the Gospel nullifies the law.

Resurrection: CL confesses that God physically raised Jesus – body, soul and all – from the dead. LP says that resurrection

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is spiritual or metaphorical, not physical, and LP often asserts that the apostles created a myth to cope with the tragic loss of their leader.

Repentance: CL confesses with Martin Luther in the first of the 95 Theses – “When our Lord and master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.” LP says that we need not repent of our entire lives. Humankind decides what needs to be repented and what doesn’t.

Justification: CL confesses that when God justifies sinners, He puts the old Adam and Eve in all of us to death and raises us to a new life in Christ. LP says that God sets the old Adam and Eve in us free to keep on living. As some have quipped, “justification of sin rather than the sinner.”

Faith in Jesus: CL confesses that faith in Jesus Christ is necessary for salvation. LP says that faith in Jesus is not necessary for all people. The Lutheran, November 2005, included an essay by a dying Lutheran theologian that asserted, “The only final condition for eternal participation in Christ’s victory is that we be dead.”

Sanctification: CL confesses that by means of our new birth in Christ, the Holy Spirit makes us holy, blessing us with the very righteousness of Christ. Because LP denies original sin and the radical work that God does in justifying the ungodly, it sees wholeness existing naturally in the world, and even goes so far as blessing sinful behavior.

Holy Baptism: CL confesses God uses baptism to join sinners to the death and resurrection of Jesus. LP tends to view baptism as a membership card that entitles individuals to rights and freedoms that they demand. They use baptism to serve their wants, needs and desires.

Holy Communion: CL confesses that Jesus is present with his body and blood to forgive sins. It is His supper and He is the

host. LP shifts the focus to a church as the host of a banquet and celebration, making sinners the host of the meal, rather than Jesus.

Church’s mission: CL believes that Jesus’ great commission in Matthew 28:18-20 sets the primary mission of the church – preaching and teaching Jesus to everyone. LP emphasizes social justice causes as the mission of the church. The causes are well intentioned and truly part of the church’s needed social ministry, however social ministry is not the unique mission of the church.

Kingdom of God: CL confesses that God’s kingdom comes from the new creation and breaks into this old creation here and now in the presence and work of His Son and Holy Spirit. The kingdom is not of this world. God brings the kingdom to us from above and from the future that He prepares. LP tends to view the kingdom as being of this world and the building of it is our work – often sounding like a utopian earthly kingdom that we prepare from below in this world. ♦

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vides an order of service for the blessings.

This synod’s action takes advantage of the ambiguous action approved by the 2005 ELCA churchwide assembly regarding blessing same-sex relationships and contradicts the assembly’s call for continuing respect for the 1993 bishops’ statement disapproving of blessing ceremonies. Surely the New England Synod’s action will be brought by someone to the ELCA Church Council this spring or the 2007 churchwide assembly for possible clarification, acceptance or rejection.

Clark Eglund commented by e-mail in early February, "The fog has lifted in less than two years and the intentional ambiguity of

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nation’s 1970s conflict over ordaining women. Individuals and some parishes have left or tried to leave the church. Legal battles over property, including endowments, are in process. Priests have been suspended or removed from their priestly duties. A duly elected bishop’s appointment was declared null and void on a church law technicality.

Besides asking for clarification and a moratorium on ordaining practicing homosexuals, the primates offered a plan to provide pastoral care for those in disagreement with the denomination. They also asked both sides in the lawsuits to put aside the legal disputes for now.

In March, the American Episcopal House of Bishops responded: ignoring the Sept. 30 deadline and the request to put lawsuits on hold. They rejected the communiqué proposal for a new system of pastoral care for Episcopal church members who disagree with the denomination in general or their bishops in particular on, among other things, the traditional, biblical stance that homosexual behavior is not compatible with Scripture.

Some Episcopal parishes and members have sought and received pastoral care from African bishops and dioceses in the past year, much to the displeasure of The Episcopal Church leaders. Provinces and dioceses usually have strict geographic boundaries, meaning bishops are not to care for parishes nor individuals outside of their own dioceses or provinces.

The House of Bishops also asked for a face-to-face meeting as soon as possible with the Archbishop of Canterbury and a primates standing committee for three days of “prayer and conversation” about these issues, at the expense of The Episcopal Church. Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori was reported by a number of sources to have told the bishops that during the primates February meeting that she had invited Williams to visit. She said he indi-

cated his calendar was too full.

The American bishops documents did state several times that The Episcopal Church wanted to and hoped to remain in the Anglican Communion. But the documents accused some unnamed bishops of violating their provincial boundaries.

News reports in secular and Christian media after the primates communiqué used words such as, “directive, ultimatum, rift, consequences, undue pressure and impatient forces.” Early reports called the Americans response “(a) showdown,” or said things like “...the American bishops flatly rejected the primates demands.”

And, in writing, the pronouncements from the primates and the American bishops gave those impressions. The primates threatened expulsion from the Anglican Communion. The Americans wrote that the pastoral care proposal violated their church law and the founding principles of their church that had separated it from colonialism and the Church of England. They also said it “sacrifice(d) the emancipation of the laity” and provided instead “the exclusive leadership of high-ranking bishops.”

It also read: “...we proclaim a Gospel that welcomes diversity of thought and encourages free and open theological debate as a way of seeking God’s truth. If that means that others reject us and communion with us, as some have already done, we must with great regret and sorrow accept their decision.”

However, some bishops seemed to soften the House of Bishops responses in an article from The Episcopal Church about a telephone news conference on the last day the House of Bishops meeting. They also seemed to confound the primates request for clarification on the ordination of homosexuals in same-sex relationships and blessing such relationships by Sept. 30, similarly to earlier tactics of responding to the primates with indirect and ambiguous answers.

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the churchwide actions in Orlando in 2005 regarding this issue has come to fruition. I think the 'fruit' is an apple and it is as old as Eden. Do these church leaders really believe they know the difference between good and evil so much so that they can redefine it apart from the Word of God?

"Since when is pastoral care defined as leaving people in their sin and then creating a service to bless it?"

"ELCA leaders in the New England Synod, and in the Southeastern Synod and churchwide discipline committees, have with these actions, shown their complete disregard for the authority of the Word of God in all matters of faith and life," said Eglund. "They are determined to take the place of God and decide what is sin and what isn't."

WordAlone Director Mark Chavez, in e-mail comments, added, "The hearing committee, like all ELCA committees dealing with the sexuality matters, is lopsided in support of approving homosexual relationships. It says that if the ELCA policy was changed, 'this committee would find almost unanimously that Pastor Schmeling is not engaged in conduct that is incompatible with the ministerial office, and would find with near unanimity that no discipline of any sort should be imposed against him.'"

Clark Eglund said, "Jesus was all about healing and forgiveness and embracing sinners but not their sin. His repeated call to 'Go and sin no more,' though impossible to achieve, still witnesses to his desire for our lives. When did he ever 'green flag' the church to move ahead in this manner?"

"The irony of these actions in New England and Atlanta is that they run counter to the ELCA's professed desire to be an ecumenical church," said Chavez. "These actions will further cut off the ELCA from most other Lutheran churches in the world not to mention most Christian churches in the world—the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Anglican

Communion and all evangelical churches." "This intentional disobedience shows little care for all the members of the body of Christ in the ELCA," Chavez said. "The leaders in New England and on the hearing committee that met in Atlanta do not want to be accountable to the rest of the ELCA and their actions will contribute directly to the further decline of the ELCA." ♦

("Conflict..." Continues from page nine)

According to the news release the House of Bishops agreed to discuss The Episcopal Church and its Anglican identity, to listen to members on the issues and to go to their September meeting ready to respond to "remaining aspects" of the primates Communiqué.

Jefferts Schori apparently told reporters that the House of Bishops had not discussed "gay bishops or same sex blessings."

Interestingly, though, one of the three documents adopted by the House of Bishops included the statement, "...all God's children, including gay and lesbian persons, are full and equal participants in the life of Christ's Church."

In discussing the primates proposal for alternative pastoral care, Bishop Stacy Sauls of Lexington, Ky., reportedly said, "It would be my opinion that there could possibly be a way to structure a primatial vicar (pastoral care) agreement that would be acceptable to the House of Bishops and meet the needs of our members who conscientiously cannot accept the actions of the General Convention in 2003."

The news release continued, "The presiding bishop seemed to agree, 'My sense is that those details may be part of the discussion we expect to have around the church during the summer and that further conversation will be had at our meeting in September.'" ♦

Lutheran Clergy Connect

Clergy Connect is a way for churches seeking a pastor or other leader to connect with 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. A full list, including more listings and detail, is posted at: www.word-alone.org/clergy.shtml

To list your search on Clergy Connect, 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. Include: title, church's name (city and state), contact person with phone number and e-mail address. Please inform us when you fill the position.

St. John's Lutheran Church American Falls, Idaho

Position: Full-time pastor.

Contact: Send résumé and names of references to: Attn: Edith Kopp, Office Manager, PO Box 55, American Falls, ID 83211-0055

Holy Cross Lutheran Church Brigham City, Utah

Position: Full-time pastor.

Contact: Pete Baumgartner at 435-734-9273 or 525 East 300 South, Brigham City, UT 84302

Dear Reader,

Send letters to ELCA leaders

The annual gathering of Lutheran CORE is scheduled April 30 at 7:30 p.m. at Calvary Lutheran, Golden Valley, Minn., as a segment of the WordAlone annual convention. Reports and updates on Lutheran CORE's ministry, adoption of a budget and a revised Basic Principles for our coalition are on the agenda.

We want to make readers aware of two matters that are of greatest importance for us now:

Churchwide assembly this August. At this churchwide assembly the church will call a presiding bishop and secretary, and will elect members to serve on the churchwide Church Council. Our goal is to work with others, so that orthodox and confessional people are elected to these important positions. We are moving in this direction and are seeking to discern whom we should support.

Concerns about changing ordination guidelines. By now, you have likely have heard or read about Pastor Bradley Schmeling and the action of New England Synod Council. That synod council approved official guidelines for blessing same sex unions. The discipline hearing

committee for Pastor Schmeling authorized his removal from the pastoral office, but not until after the conclusion of the churchwide assembly. It now seems likely as a result of the actions by the New England Synod Council and the report from discipline hearing committee on Pastor Schmeling, that the issue of human sexuality will again be on the agenda for the churchwide assembly. (See related article on page 1.)

These two matters place momentous issues before our church once again, though in slightly different packages than before. We hope you will spread our concerns as widely as possible, and that you will take the initiative and write to your bishops, synod councils and delegates to synod and churchwide assemblies.

The Schmeling case and the New England Synod guidelines underscore the seriousness of our concerns for the ELCA. They also challenge us in our mission: to be a confessing and confessional movement and a voice for the Word of God in our church.

(Signed)

Steering Committee

Lutheran CORE - COalition for REform