

NETWORK NEWS

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November 15-17

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Churchwide Assembly approves ordination for partnered gays and lesbians

Homosexuals in same-sex relationships will be allowed to become ordained or professional lay ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in the near future, because of a 559-451 vote at the Churchwide Assembly in August in Minneapolis, Minn.

The denomination has been discussing issues of human sexuality, studying them and voting on them for many years, some say since its founding in the late 1980s. At the 2009 assembly, 1,045 members voted on changing ministry standards concerning homosexual behavior and approved a social statement on human sexuality.

Efforts to sidetrack the changes or require a two-thirds majority vote for approval were defeated.

The vote allowing practicing homosexuals to become ministers is a major policy change for the ELCA and is expected to take a few months to implement. Formerly, the denomination allowed the ordination of homosexual persons who agreed to remain celibate.

The social statement and proposal to ordain practicing homosexuals came from an ELCA task force established in 2001 by churchwide assembly vote. Church leaders and others in favor of the change, including the majority of the task force, have stated in recent years that the issue need not be a divisive one for the church and have made

many calls for maintaining unity in the face of disagreement.

The social statement, a teaching document, is the 10th such statement adopted by the ELCA. It required a two-thirds majority for acceptance. The vote was 676 for and 338 against, just garnering the two-thirds majority, 66.67 percent to 33.33 percent.

The proposal this year, for the first time, carefully defined practicing homosexual persons eligible for ordination or approval for ministry as persons in “publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationships.”

In addition this year, the ministry proposals, as presented, basically offered local option, allowing churches to call non-celibate homosexual ministers if they choose to but not requiring congregations to call non-celibate homosexuals.

The proposal for changing ministry standards also explicitly spoke of how to treat persons who disagreed on the issue. It called on the ELCA “to commit itself to bear one another’s burdens, love the neighbor and respect the bound consciences of all.”

During assembly discussion of the ordination changes, former WordAlone Network board member Al Quie, voting member from the Minneapolis Synod, offered a substitute motion that would have

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continued the previous requirement for homosexuals’ celibacy and added a statement precluding practicing homosexual persons from ordination or working as a professional lay minister.

That move was defeated 344-670.

Edward A. Kirst, voting member from the Northeastern Ohio Synod, moved to require a two-thirds majority, rather than a simple majority, for approval for changing ministry standards. Kirst’s motion was voted down 407-576.

The ELCA Church Council had recommended last fall to the assembly that a simple majority would be sufficient. The matter of what majority to require on the change came up and was defeated during the assembly’s discussion of its rules in the gathering’s first business session.

In discussions of the ministry standards proposals, John M. Prabhakar, a former sexuality task force member and voting member from the Northern Illinois Synod, summarized opposition to the ordination and ministry standards when he said he found “no compelling reason” theologically, biblically or historically “to roster gay and lesbians in committed, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships.”

Prabhakar stated, “I simply cannot do that [support the proposals] with a clear conscience. The arguments I’ve heard so far seem to be emotional and personal.”

Speaking for the proposals, Kirsten Nelson Roenfeldt, voting member from the Rocky Mountain Synod, said, “Today, we children of God can proclaim that the gospel compels us to uncompromising inclusion that allows gay and lesbian people to serve our church and live a life of accountable partnership.”

She said voting members had an opportunity to be evangelists, “Let us embrace our opportunity for evangelism and speak to those who have been excluded.”

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God will not be mocked— especially when steeples fall.

by Pastor Jaynan L. Clark, WordAlone Network president

Some things are not up for a vote.

Some things we as creatures do not have the right to even think we can change.

We as creatures have forgotten our place. Instead of prostrating ourselves face down on the ground before God, Our Father and Our Creator, in humble obedience and prayer, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—as a shrinking “sideline” denomination—decided to continue its in-your-face unfaithful and disrespectful conduct toward God, Our Maker, ignoring all interventions, warnings and signs.

The ELCA put God’s Word and all of its teachings on the natural order, marriage and family up for a vote and the result was a resounding 66.67 percent approval for changing them.

How many times has the WordAlone Network called foul? How many speeches, articles, news releases have we put out trying to be clear but not angry—pointing out that the natural order is not up for a vote.

God is God, and He will not be mocked.

Yet, year after year the agenda gets pushed, assembly after assembly it gets more in our faces until this year, in this assembly, here in the city of the headquarters of one of the predecessor bodies, the old ALC (American Lutheran Church), things were different.

One could hear it, feel it, and just simply know it . . . this was the year that the ELCA was going to actually cross the line as an institution and make clear to those with ears to hear that it is not an orthodox Lutheran Christian church. The ELCA is a misguided, unfaithful, social institution giving birth to a new religion that only gives lip service to Jesus and His Word.

It is difficult to express to all of you the happenings of the churchwide assembly as things began to build up and fall down (go ahead and envision the Tower of Babel).

As a former missionary who served in Tanzania, East Africa, I prayed, watched and hoped that the visible nature of God as I had experienced Him there among the faithful Lutherans in Tanzania would be revealed that week.

In East Africa they have not yet gotten sucked in by this post-modern era to believe that being enlightened means being smarter than God; who still regard that as a First Commandment violation; who know that spiritual warfare is a reality and that Satan is not only real, as the Bible is so very clear on, but targets those whose witness will damage his kingdom. These faithful live, pray and worship differently.

The African Christians knew that I firmly believed that the storm that shook the convention center in Orlando back in 2005 at the churchwide assembly and flickered the lights as the ELCA furthered its agenda to put God’s Word, the created order and its entire teaching about what is to be blessed and ordained up for a vote, came from the hand of God. The ELCA pushed on, as if there would be no consequences.

The 2009 churchwide assembly was like a freight train out of Hell. In the name of inclusion I’ve never felt so excluded. In the name of love, I’ve never felt so despised. In the name of equality and justice, I’ve never felt so discounted and marginalized.

In addition to being told by more than one speaker that we are guilty of the unforgivable sin, I listened in disgust to racist comments made against the growing,

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vibrant Lutheran church in Tanzania. I heard the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch twisted and misused as a concerned Ethiopian ELCA member, a former bishop and Lutheran World Federation vice president (from the very church that the presiding bishop held up in his report as an example because of its multi-cultural nature and fast growth), was escorted from the convention center because “the paying customers were complaining.”



One volunteer gathered money to buy the African ELCA members visitors passes so they could continue to tell their story to the voters in the halls and on the sidewalks, hoping that if the voters wouldn't listen to those of us they had already written off they might, in their great push for inclusivity, listen to those praying and begging that the ELCA not take this fatal step. But ears were stopped up and hearts hardened.

As I told another ELCA Ethiopian pastor on the phone hours before the vote, we are going to make God very angry, and I only hope and pray that in the face of this sinfulness and the work of the Evil One He will act more like He does in Africa. We need another storm like the one in Orlando and maybe this time someone will heed the warning.

Yes, this happened. Speaker after speaker twisted God's Word to say that we, the judgmental Pharisees, were just fearful people, disregarding WordAlone's many years of trying to be respectful, loving, a loyal opposition. Exclusion was hurled in our faces.

Yes, we are fearful but not of the assembly, not of the votes, not of the leadership. We have to and do fear God, Our Father and Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ in the true sense of fear of the Lord and the wisdom that it ushers in.

For years we have prayed for clarity. We have it. According to National Public Radio, the tornado came out of nowhere. On the other side of the street from the Minneapolis Convention Center, the cross on top of Central Lutheran was bent toward the ground and tents and tables were turned over.

The very roof at the other end of the convention center from where the assembly would soon vote was damaged.

At an accelerating pace, the assembly moved forward, cut debate, refused to hear more amendments—especially ones on homosexual behavior or cohabitation—and rejected attempts to speak the Word from the floor of the assembly. The votes were punched into electronic handhelds and the results came up on the screen.

The numbers could not be denied. The statement on human sexuality passed by one vote, bringing the percentage to a number not unknown to those who read their Bibles: 66.67.

God, Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth and Father of our one Lord, Jesus Christ, will not be mocked.

The writing has been on the wall for quite some time. WordAlone hears the call to witness obediently that God is not doing a new thing with sexuality, not trading the natural for the unnatural, not directing his church to act against His created order nor un-sinners sin or blessing it.

God is doing a new thing in this enlightened, post-modern, rational scientific culture that has denied his power for much too long, forgotten the reality of God's wrath and usurped His authority. We could learn from the Ethiopians and other African Christians, and Christians from other parts

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Support new pastors

The WordAlone Network's Seminary Debt Relief Fund is used to assist confessional Lutheran pastors in their first five years of pastoral ministry to repay their seminary student loans. The fund is for pastors not ordained by a bishop under the provisions of the ELCA's 2001 bylaw amendment.

WordAlone is aware of two new pastors not ordained by bishops this year, bringing the total to 41. There may be more not yet reported. These ordinations have taken

place in 21 synods. WordAlone knows that at least three requests this year were denied.

Gifts to the debt relief fund for seminarians will be most helpful. WordAlone has not been able to give as much assistance to the growing number of eligible recipients as hoped in the past couple years. You may give to this fund by making a check out to “WordAlone Network” and mark “for SDRF” on the memo line of the check. ♦

'The rock of the church is God's Word, not a social statement on sexuality'

(‘Approves...’ Continues from page two)

In a press conference after votes on the ministry proposals, Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson said he was grateful for how the denomination had discussed sexuality issues for the past eight years, including the 2009 assembly, which talked about the matters with deep and heartfelt respect for the view of the other.

Hanson said he was always concerned when he heard that congregations or clergy were considering leaving the ELCA in light of the assembly's decisions. He said he had an even deeper concern for those at that point that evening. He asked them to continue talking with the ELCA about how they could stay in the denomination with integrity so the ELCA could respect their consciences.

In other action, the assembly approved its sixth full communion agreement, this one with the United Methodist Church. According to the ELCA, full communion makes possible a variety of joint ministries, sharing of resources and interchangeability of clergy. *(Includes information gathered by staff and the ELCA News Service.)* ♦

(‘Not mocked...’ Continues from page four)

of the world, where they haven't decided to regard God as mere divine spark, impotent and unable to intervene.

But many still do not revere or regard the signs and wonders.

I humbly thank God for His intervention and His witness to His power that has given great assurance to those of us fighting the good fight. It isn't about us and our agenda; we are only called to tell the story and obey.

My response was to quote the hymn, “Built on a rock the church shall stand even when steeples are falling.” The rock of the church is God's Word, not a social statement on sexuality.

I am so glad that I am the president of the WordAlone Network and not the presiding bishop of the ELCA and the president of the Lutheran World Federation, for there are consequences for our actions and they will be global. ♦

‘Ears to hear’?

by Pastor Mark C. Chavez, WordAlone vice president

The 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly made grievous decisions that will not help the denomination in the years ahead. A summary of the major decisions can be found on pp. 1-2. One biblical phrase kept coming to mind in the weeks leading up to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America churchwide assembly and very often during the August assembly—“ears to hear.” The phrase occurs repeatedly in the Old and New Testaments, including this one by our Lord, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Mark 4:9)

Several things happened around and during the assembly that raise the question, are there “ears to hear” in the ELCA, particularly in the churchwide “expression”? Are there ears to hear God’s Word? Are there ears to hear most Christians and most church leaders in the world? Are there ears to hear the very ELCA members that ELCA leaders say they most want to include in the life of the ELCA?

No scriptural argument?

This was in an Associated Press report on Aug. 14:

Bishop Peter Rogness, leader of the church's St. Paul, Minn., synod, said differences over homosexuality are "driven more by the hysteria in the culture" than by what Scripture says. "If someone tries to argue this is going to be the test as to whether we are scripturally faithful or not, that's a hard argument to make because Scripture says so little about homosexuality," Rogness said. ("Lutherans prepare for big decision on gay clergy" by Patrick Condon)

In fact, the Bible says more about homosexual behavior than many other forms of sexual immorality. Just as breathtaking is Rogness’ complete dismissal of the basis of 2,000 years of Christian teaching. Has

Rogness never heard that Christians have taught homosexual behavior is immoral precisely because of the Bible’s consistent, clear proscription of the behavior? Christians have done so in cultures that approved and disapproved of homosexual behavior. Does Rogness really believe that 2,000 years of Christian witness was driven by “hysteria in the culture”?

There is a half-truth in Bishop Rogness’ assertion, though I doubt he meant it in this way. North American culture, which sets very few sexual boundaries, clearly has been driving the movement in the ELCA and other churches to disobey the clear Scriptural norms.

**'Jesus
would be
passing out
condoms???'**

Jesus would be passing out condoms???

An ELCA pastor informed the churchwide assembly in a discussion of the ELCA’s HIV and AIDS strategy that his congregation hands out condoms “to anyone who asks for them, young or old.” He had emailed his bishop and asked if he could pass out condoms, and the bishop responded, “Jesus would be passing out condoms.”

Churches that pass out condoms are all but saying to their members, “When you have sex outside marriage, make sure you use a condom.” Do ELCA leaders really hear

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(‘Ears to hear...’ Continues from page six)

Jesus saying that he would pass out condoms in a church or anywhere to people who are having sex outside marriage?

Church growth or decline?

Several times during the assembly, voting members in favor of the sexuality proposals asserted that approving of sex outside of marriage would help the ELCA grow and attract members. Pastor Paul Tidemann, former pastor of St Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minn., said not to fear losing members by approving the proposals. When his church became a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation, he said they grew. (RIC churches are those that publicly welcome gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered people and approve of their behavior and relationships.)

I don’t know when Tidemann’s church became an RIC church, but from 2001 to 2008 St. Paul-Reformation’s baptized membership was down 10.4 percent and average worship attendance was down 12 percent. An analysis of statistics from the ELCA website shows that the average decline of RIC congregations in the ELCA exceeds the overall average decline:

	Baptized membership		
	2001	2008	%
Avg. RIC church	424	376	-11.3%
Avg. ELCA church	476	449	-5.7%
	Worship Attendance		
	2001	2008	%
Avg. RIC church	148	127	-14.2%
Avg. ELCA church	146	128	-12.3%

Sacrificing ecumenical relationships

One of the ELCA’s highest priorities has been ecumenical relationships. The churchwide assembly majority decided that sex was a higher priority. Almost 50 years of ecumenical work were seriously undermined by the assembly. Lutheran World Federation church leaders warned the ELCA not to approve of sex outside mar-

riage. Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod President Gerald Kieschnick warned that the assembly’s decision risked creating a “chasm” between the ELCA and LCMS. Roman Catholic Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory said in his videotaped greeting to the assembly that the ELCA’s decisions:

... may have weighty consequences for the unity of your own church and for its relationships with the Catholic Church and other Christian bodies. At stake are the teachings of Scripture and Tradition that safeguard the noble purposes of human sexuality and the fundamental meaning of marriage, which is a reflection of God’s covenant with us in Christ. Our prayer for you, as brothers and sisters who journey with you in hope, is that you remain open to the Holy Spirit who binds our consciences to truth, biblical truth that echoes through the ages. At the ecumenical service in New York City on April 18, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI asserted that without this adherence to Holy Scripture, “our communion with the Church in every age is lost—just at the time when the world is losing its bearings and needs a persuasive common witness to the saving power of the Gospel (cf. Rom 1:18-23).”

How ironic that a 21st century Roman Catholic pope and an archbishop can better articulate confessional Lutheran teaching than the ELCA churchwide organization. Does the ELCA have ears to hear any of its ecumenical partners other than the United Church of Christ and The Episcopal Church, the other two churches that have clearly disobeyed God’s Word by approving of sex outside of marriage?

Sacrificing multiculturalism

One of the other high priorities for the ELCA has been to become a more multicultural church. Bishop Craig Johnson of Minneapolis and Bishop Mark Hanson

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‘Ears to hear...’ Continues from page seven)

boasted early in the assembly how multicultural the ELCA is, mentioning by name Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church in Minneapolis, an Ethiopian immigrant church that is the fastest growing church in the synod. Did the bishops hear that 200 members of the Oromo church had been praying in the weeks before the assembly and during the assembly that the ELCA would not disobey God’s Word? Did they listen to the church’s leaders and members who came to the Minneapolis convention center to plead with voting members not to adopt the sexuality task force proposals?

The assembly majority, with the support of most of the churchwide staff, decided that sex is more important than multiculturalism. The ELCA churchwide organization did not listen to the ethnic leaders in the ELCA who had warned how difficult evangelism will be in their communities when people learn that the ELCA approves of homosexual behavior. Some Hispanic ELCA pastors were quick to issue a renunciation of the assembly’s decisions. Does the ELCA have ears to hear people of African, Asian, Middle Eastern and Hispanic descent?

New foundational premises

Bishop Mark Hanson appointed an ad hoc committee at the churchwide assembly to deal with proposed amendments to the social statement. One amendment proposed adding clear and strong language about marriage from the last social statements on marriage by the American Lutheran Church and Lutheran Church in America (two of the three churches that merged to form the ELCA in 1988), including:

Marriage is a structure of human life built into the creation by the Creator. It builds upon our creation as male and female (Genesis 1:27). Sexual differences are of God’s good design, intended to bring joy and enrichment to human life as well as to provide for procreation. The essence of marriage is that in the act and relationships of

marriage two persons become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

The ad hoc committee recommended the amendment not be adopted “because the proposed substitution does not incorporate or build upon the foundational premises which are important for the coherence and consistency of the document [2009 social statement].” The assembly agreed with the committee—the ELCA cannot teach about marriage as the predecessor churches did because of its new foundational premises.

What are the new foundational premises? The ad hoc committee cited “God’s unfailing trustworthiness in **our** relationships and in **our** social institutions (emphasis added)” and marriage is “a social structure . . . that best supports trust.” Note how the committee focused on the human side, not the Divine, in its use of “our.” Note also how different its language (and the language of the social statement) is from a sentence in the earlier social statements rejected by the assembly: “Marriage is ordained by God as a structure of the created order.”

The assembly majority made it clear that it didn’t have ears to hear the witness of the two main churches that formed the ELCA, not to mention Scripture’s clear Word.

The individual is the ultimate authority

In a press conference on Aug. 21 following all the sexuality votes, Bishop Mark Hanson clearly identified the “authoritative source and norm” in the ELCA for sexuality. He used “personal morality” at least three times when talking about the disagreements over sexual behavior.

Until that press conference I had never heard or seen anyone pair those two words as he did. Morality by definition involves some other person, so it can never be personal.

Surely Hanson and the ELCA churchwide organization would never say that racism, sexism, militarism and greed are matters of

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‘Ears to hear...’ Continues from page eight)

“personal morality” upon which Christians may disagree. Yet when it comes to sexuality, Hanson and the churchwide organization turn out to be radical proponents of individualism.

Radical individualism is embedded in the new definition of the “bound conscience” in the ELCA social statement on sexuality. The statement asserts in footnote 26 that “salvation is not at stake” in questions about morality (try squaring that assertion with 1 Corinthians 6:9ff or many other biblical passages) and says:

We understand that, in this discernment about ethics and church practice, faithful people can and will come to different conclusions about the meaning of Scripture and about what constitutes responsible action. We further believe that this church, on the basis of “the bound conscience,” will include these different understandings and practices within its life as it seeks to live out its mission and ministry in the world. (p. 11)

The social statement quotes Luther’s reply at the Diet of Worms when he said, “my conscience is captive to the words of God.” The ELCA social statement shifts from consciences captive to God’s external Word to consciences bound to human internal words – what each believer concludes “about the meaning of Scripture.”

The ELCA will now teach contrary to its own confession of faith, which states that the Old and New Testaments are “the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.” Instead the ELCA will be teaching that the “authoritative source and norm” for morality in the ELCA churchwide organization is each individual sinner.

Who has moved to the periphery?

Bishop Mark Hanson told the assembly on Friday afternoon that he wanted to reach out to those who were opposed to the sexu-

ality proposals. In the press conference immediately following, he repeated it saying, “We tend to our relationships.”

Tellingly, here is how he described those who opposed the approval of sex outside marriage: as “those who once were at the center, but now find themselves at the periphery. . .”

"Scripture is 'the authoritative source and norm.' "

Some ELCA members remain standing firm at the center—the center of the Lutheran confession of the Christian faith. They are the minority of the voting members at the 2009 churchwide assembly along with many ELCA members who still believe and practice what the ELCA confession of faith states—Scripture is “the authoritative source and norm.” These ELCA members stand with most of the Christian Church on earth.

Some ELCA members have indeed moved themselves to the periphery—the periphery of the whole Christian church. They are the majority of the churchwide assembly voting members that rejected God’s clear words in Scripture that forbid all sex outside of marriage and the ELCA leaders and members who will follow them to the periphery. ♦

To change or not to change, that was the question

by Pastor Jaynan L. Clark, WordAlone Network president

To all believers, not just Lutherans, and to all not-yet believers in Jesus Christ: Have ears to hear!

It is very important for you to hear today that Jesus died for you to save you from your sin through repentance, forgiveness and new life, which are true freedom in Him.

That is the message and the calling for the church. That is not up for a vote.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America cannot change the need for repentance and forgiveness by a vote to accept homosexual behavior as it did during its assembly last month.

Only the arrogant, the ignorant and those led astray would believe such.

Luther never wanted a church named after him. I'm doubtful he would want these actions connected to his name. The ELCA has put a stain on the fabric of all churches that carry Luther's name.

Instead of questioning the Bible from their perspective, churches should let the Bible question them, their perspectives, experiences and actions.

Hear also, Lutherans, and all other Christians, how important it is to distinguish the human institution from the true church of God. Lutherans from the time of the Reformation have believed that the organization exists "for good order."

Luther's last stand was based on the Word of God and on sound reason. He was not convinced otherwise then; we in WordAlone are not convinced now.

When God said, "I am who I am," He meant it, not "I am who you want me to be" or "who you want to remake me to be." God

and His Word are the authority over all of faith and life.

God's Word is not up for a vote and, remember, He always gets the last word because He alone is eternal.

The ELCA assembly voted against the authoritative Word of God. The assembly swapped His Word for human words that are neither based on sound reason nor good order. In fact, the assembly voted against the Word of God, sound reason and the good order of creation.

That is not only not Lutheran, it is not Christian and it is not the work of the church but of a misguided, shrinking, side-line denomination whose leadership's ears cannot hear and can no longer even discern or recognize, let alone revere, God's direct warning and intervention.

God will not be mocked.

Steeple fall, the cross hangs upside down, the tables are overturned and the ELCA leadership pushes forward a human agenda and dismisses God's clear directive and the church's long history of teachings. So, is what was passed now to be taught to our children?

Is this what Jesus' love that "knows no bounds" really means? So what is it the ELCA will say "no" to? Are there any boundaries? That type of faulty parenting should bring to our door the Christian equivalent of child protective services. We are leading Jesus' children astray.

Is the ELCA saying "no" to Jesus, to the Bible, to the historical teaching of the church, to those who stand only on the Word of God and to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church but not to desires and experiences of homosexual behavior?

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(‘Change...’ Continues from page ten)

This is really an old, old story . . . as old as the debate over the apple itself. As it was then, it shall always be that when humans are faced with doing either what they want to do or what God tells them to do, we "fall." It is the same old sin: self over God and His Word.

Swapping Jesus' story for its own will have consequences for the ELCA.

But the end of this story is the beginning of another that witnesses to the One who is eternally to be known as the Crucified One because, as we have witnessed, even this church continues pounding the spikes into His scarred hands.

As the eternally Risen One, bearing the scars of our sin, He promises not to abandon but to abide and to raise up a faithful remnant to join with the vast majority of the faithful Lutherans worldwide.

We are not Lutheran orphans, because we stand with all the other Lutheran bodies who still believe in the authority of God's Word and with the whole Holy Christian Church.

Be changed by God's Word. Don't let the Word be changed. ♦

**'He promises
not to
abandon
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and raise
up a faithful
remnant...
We are not
Lutheran
orphans!'**

Lutheran Clergy Connect

Clergy Connect is a way for churches seeking a pastor or other leader to connect with candidates who believe that the Word of God is the authority for the church. More listings and details are posted at: www.wordalone.org/clergy.shtml

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Contact: stpaulcallcommittee@gvtc.com
or Shirley Moore at
mooreshirley@msn.com or
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Position: Chaplain

Contact: Rev. Larry Rockemann,
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