

Mission Statement

WordAlone is a Lutheran grassroots network of congregations and individuals committed to the authority of the Word manifest in Jesus the Christ as proclaimed in Scripture and safeguarded through the work of the Holy Spirit. WordAlone advocates reform and renewal of the church, representative governance, theological integrity, and freedom from a mandated historic episcopate.

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Third sexuality study responses due by Nov. 1

It is important that the ELCA sexuality task force hears from ELCA members who uphold Biblical norms for sexuality. Group and individual responses to "Free in Christ to Serve the Neighbor: Lutherans Talk about Human Sexuality" are strongly encouraged. You may order printed copies from Augsburg Fortress (800-328-4648) or download the study at <http://www.elca.org/faithfuljourney/pdf/study03.pdf>.

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NETWORK NEWS



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Churchwide assembly urges bishops not to discipline practicing gay pastors

by Betsy Carlson, editor

While the churchwide assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America essentially said, "not now," to officially allowing ministers in same-sex relationships to serve the denomination, the voting members also seemed to say, "let's wink at the rules so practicing homosexuals can be in ministry."

Initially they voted 819 to 171 to refer ordination standards resolutions from synod assemblies to a task force on sexuality that is preparing a social statement for the 2009 churchwide assembly. With little discussion, the churchwide assembly also referred most synod assembly "memorials" (resolutions) on homosexuality to the task force for recommendations.

Twenty-one synod assemblies this spring had approved one or some of the resolutions on homosexuality and forwarded them to the churchwide assembly.

Most of the ELCA's 44 other synod assemblies either had voted to refer the resolutions to the ELCA task force on human sexuality, had defeated them or simply hadn't discussed them, in effect putting them

on hold for the 2007 churchwide assembly. The churchwide assembly's memorials committee, which reviews resolutions from synods, also recommended referring the resolutions.

But a "substitute" resolution came from the floor of the assembly—another attempt to change official ordination standards which would have taken effect almost immediately, without a further legislative process. The churchwide assembly defeated it, by 450 yes to 581 no.

That substitute could have allowed practicing homosexuals to become lay ministers, be ordained or continue ministering now, as a few bishops and pastors conceded some already are. Present ordination standards require homosexual ministers to remain celibate.

So, in fact the assembly voted twice against changing the ordination guidelines—this year.

However, later in the assembly in Chicago last month, voting members seemed to give

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("Discipline..." Continues from page one)

way and advised the ELCA to apparently wink at present ordination and ministry standards for homosexual persons.

The assembly voted 538 yes to 431 no for this motion from Paul Landahl, retired

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bishop of the Chicago Synod, to urge bishops, synods and the presiding bishop to refrain from disciplining pastors or lay ministers in committed same-sex relationships as well as refrain from disciplining churches that call them. Church leaders have downplayed the move, calling it "guidance" or a "sense" of the mind of the assembly, rather than a binding decision.

But it may turn out to be more or less than a wink. Landahl's resolution doesn't say for what misconduct to refrain from disciplining practicing homosexuals. Could it be construed to mean to wink at all misconduct or none? An earlier version of the resolution specifically urged the church to refrain from disciplining ministers for being practicing homosexuals.

WordAlone Network President Jaynan Clark Egland said in an interview after the session: "I don't know as a Christian, as a pastor and as a parent what really would be worse—a church with no Biblical standards to govern our ministry; or having standards we don't intend to enforce. To refrain from discipline in the home is bad parenting, but we're about to do so in Christ's Church."

"Allowing practicing homosexuals to continue in ministry even though 'Vision and Expectations' and 'Definitions and Guidelines' on ministry haven't changed, is deceptive and lacks integrity," said Pastor Paul Spring, who is chair of Lutheran CORE, which is working with WordAlone to renew and reform the ELCA.

"Isn't this really a local option? Talk about introducing even more chaos to the ELCA's roster. Some bishops already are allowing people in same-sex relationships to serve. More may join them. But not all will look the other way. Some still may bring discipline cases. This leaves the ELCA with inconsistent patterns of discipline and standards, and possibly increases the church's liability in legal cases involving sexual impropriety," Egland said.

During discussions on resolutions to change

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ELCA bishops to define accountability

by Betsy Carlson, editor

While the 2007 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Churchwide Assembly urged bishops not to discipline congregations or persons involved with calling pastors in same-sex relationships, it also asked the Conference of Bishops to talk about what their accountability should be to adopted policies, practices and procedures of the denomination.

The motion, made by Pastor David Gleason, Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, also asked the bishops to bring a statement on their accountability to the 2009 assembly for consideration.

The bishops may have to look no further than the ELCA model Constitution for Synods for a statement on their accountability: (the bishop shall...) "ensure that the constitution and bylaws of the synod and of the churchwide organization are duly observed within this synod, and that actions of the synod in conformity therewith are carried into effect." Chapter 8, section 8.12, letter I, number 3. Or similarly they can find a statement in the ELCA Constitution, in section 10.31, letter a, number 7.

"Pastor Gleason's motion is certainly needed these days," wrote Pastor Paul Spring, chair of the reform group, Lutheran CORE. For several years bishops and synods have selectively been implementing churchwide procedures.

"This is particularly the case regarding the disciplining of pastors in same-sex unions and congregations served by them. As synods and bishops select which policies they choose to implement, the ELCA's unity and interdependence are placed in serious jeopardy. I hope the bishops can work through this issue among themselves, for, in so doing, they will make the whole church stronger."

Spring spent 14 years as bishop of the

Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod. Questions on accountability of bishops were posed by e-mail to Spring and Pastor Kenneth Sauer, who was Bishop of the Ohio Synod, Lutheran Church in America from 1973-1987 and of the Southern Ohio Synod of the ELCA from 1987-1996. He was chair of the Conference of Bishops from 1991-1995.

Sauer wrote: "On many issues relating to worship, stewardship, restructuring churchwide staffing, the bishops discussed, decided and all supported publicly the common position of the bishops—even when the first sexuality issues came out. We asked at one point that the bishops not attend services of advocacy for the gay/lesbian agenda, but were told by some bishops to forget it, they'd do what they wanted—and they did.

"Unfortunately, this public unanimity is not now the case. I have been told, in fact it was public knowledge, I think, that the bishops agreed that they would not allow sexuality issues to be debated, and so on, at the 2007 assembly, but some 11 bishops reportedly communicated with one another and agreed on the strategy that we saw unfold in Chicago."

He continued, "I have further been told that the gay/lesbian folk targeted some bishops, who were too orthodox, for defeat in elections this past spring—and succeeded.

"In the early days no bishops would even have thought that they were free to follow whatever church policy they wanted. It seemed clear in our documents what our responsibility was—and even scripturally—at the very core of what bishops are called to do...defend/teach/proclaim the faith. It seems clear.

"Our church has fallen onto a very dangerous and scary path." ♦

'Sinners' and 'repentance' too 'narrow' for assembly

by Betsy Carlson, editor

The Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, early in its weeklong meeting in Chicago, re-elected Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson and adopted a five-year initiative to encourage and support ELCA members, clergy and institutions to increase their reading and study of “God’s Word.”

Hanson was re-elected on the second ballot. He needed a 75 percent majority vote for re-election and received 88 percent on the second ballot, on Tuesday morning. This will be his second and final six-year tenure because of ELCA term limits.

The Bible reading and study initiative, “Book of Faith: Lutherans Read the Bible,” which came out of a memorial from the North Carolina Synod to the 2005 churchwide assembly, is to be led by Prof. Diane Jacobson of Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

An amendment to give the program a distinctly Lutheran flavor was defeated. However, two successful amendments were made to it that basically undid what the initial amendment proposed anyway.

In a paragraph calling on the whole ELCA to increase its biblical fluency, experience deeper worship and devotion and to develop a more profound appreciation of “Lutheran principles and approaches for the use of the Scriptures,” Pastor Steve King of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod, and member of WordAlone, moved to take out the phrase after “profound appreciation of.”

He wanted to replace it with a more profound appreciation of “the distinctive Lutheran focus on God’s use of Scripture to bring sinners to repentance and salvation in Christ.”

A lively discussion followed with several

bishops taking part. A lay person, Katie Abercrombie of the Florida-Bahamas Synod and Pastor David Weeks of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod were the first to speak and were in favor of King’s move. Bishop Bruce Burnside of South-Central Wisconsin Synod spoke against the amendment saying it “narrows the purpose of the [Bible reading] initiative.”

Bishop Warren Freiheit of the Central Southern Illinois Synod spoke in favor of the amendment, but moved to amend it to remove the word “sinners” and replace it with “all.” That amendment was adopted by a vote of 887 yes to 139 no.

And Bishop Steve Ullestad of the Northeastern Iowa Synod spoke against using the word “distinctly” in King’s amendment. He stated that the salvation story is not unique to Lutheranism.

Pastor Michele Fischer of the Upstate New York Synod wanted to add the words “and relationship” and proposed another amendment to the amendment to do so. It failed 444 yes to 555 no.

Bishop Marcus Lohrmann of the Northwestern Ohio Synod spoke in favor of King’s amendment and said it was important to lift up the Lutheran focus.

Pastor Elias Kitoi Nasari of the Greater Milwaukee Synod spoke against the amendment saying it should say “use of God’s word,” not “how God uses Scripture.” He said saying that God uses Scripture involved personal interpretation and put words in God’s mouth.

New Jersey Synod Bishop Roy Riley asserted there were different approaches to Scripture and that King’s amendment would eliminate “some work we need to do” concerning differences in the church,

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Why can’t we all just get along?

by Pastor Scott Grorud, WordAlone board and Lutheran CORE steering committee

At the churchwide assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America held in Chicago last month, a significant portion of the floor debate was devoted once again to whether the ELCA should bless same-sex unions and allow people living in such relationships to serve as rostered and lay ministers. I say once again because the 2005 churchwide assembly decided to follow a 1993 statement on blessing same-sex relationships with intentional ambiguity. That assembly also voted down a proposal to ordain pastors or allow lay ministers in same-sex relationships.

Again this summer, a number of speakers noted how deeply divided the ELCA was over those issues, but as the debate continued, it became more apparent that the division was much deeper than a disagreement over God’s will for sexuality. The many speeches made for and against the proposals addressed the topic so differently that they seemed to be speaking different languages.

Over the course of the assembly, it became clear that the sexuality debate was not the source of the division in the ELCA, but only a symptom of it. The division itself has arisen from an entirely different gospel that entered the ELCA as it was formed 20 years ago. It has often been couched in traditional Christian language, but otherwise has borne little resemblance to the Gospel as it has been handed down through the ages.

The two sides on this debate could not hear one another, could not find common ground and could not simply agree to get along because they were proclaiming two different gospels.

The ELCA has not been alone in dealing with this kind of division. It has afflicted much, if not all of mainline Protestantism. In an insightful essay entitled “An Unworkable Theology,” published in 2005

in the journal, “First Things,” Dr. Philip Turner, formerly dean of the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale University, noted how these two gospels were at work in his denomination, The Episcopal Church. He described them as “a theology of divine redemption” and “a theology of divine acceptance.”

The “theology of divine redemption” is the Gospel as it has long been understood in the Christian Church. It declares that the basic problem in creation is human sin and that Jesus’ death on the cross is God’s solution to it. It focuses on God’s forgiveness, which puts sinners to death and raises them to new life in Christ. It acknowledges that Christians are *simul iustus et peccator*, simultaneously saints and sinners, so that, as Martin Luther stated in the first of his 95 Theses, “Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ...willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.” Because of the *simul*, it recognizes that human motives and desires are always corrupt, and so it calls believers to strive for holy living according to God’s Word. This theology of redemption insists that all our beliefs and actions must be solidly grounded in Holy Scripture.

In sharp contrast, the theology of divine acceptance has located sin outside of humans in oppressive social norms that have excluded people from being fully accepted in their “created goodness.” Turner identified five key components of this new gospel. It began with the assertion that God is love, as 1 John 4:8 declares. This new gospel, however, has insisted that God was only love. There were no wrath, no judgment and no condemnation for sinners. God was characterized as love, and nothing but love.

Therefore, the incarnation, life and death of Jesus implied no judgment on human sin,

five

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but only affirmed the created goodness of all people. Jesus meant that God accepted everyone unconditionally, affirming them just as they were, according to the gospel of inclusion.

Significantly, the cross has all but disappeared from this theology, because it had no real need of it. Human sin has not been the problem, so no solution to it has been necessary. What mattered has been that Jesus reached out to the marginalized and excluded in society, welcomed them and included them in the kingdom. Thus, it has portrayed Christian freedom not as freedom in Christ, as Paul described it, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." (Galatians 2:20) Rather, it has been seen as an unfettered freedom from all external expectations and has allowed us to "be ourselves," by giving full expression to our human nature and its desires.

The third step in this new gospel then has said that, since God was love and Jesus' ministry was all about love, his followers were to love others in the same way. Again, that has been said to be a Biblical call. Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another...just as I have loved you." (John 13:34) But once more, love has been defined solely in terms of inclusion and acceptance. It has not been the kind of "tough love" that calls sinners to account and bids them to take up their crosses and follow Jesus to Calvary. The result of this new gospel's love was not to have been repentance and death to ourselves, but acceptance and love of ourselves, because God has accepted and loved us.

Given such assumptions, a new purpose then had to be found for the Christian Church to exist. It could not be centered in proclaiming God's justification of the ungodly, because this gospel did not believe that people were ungodly, except to the extent that they excluded people. Instead, the mission of the church has

become advocating for churchly and public policies that have promoted "social justice," also defined in terms of including everyone, but especially those who were in any way marginalized by social norms in all aspects of society, including the church. This is why the agendas of ELCA synod and churchwide assemblies have become so dominated by social and political issues. Under the gospel of inclusion, seeking "peace and justice" has become the *raison d'être* of the Christian church.

Finally, by defining the kingdom of God as a place where those who have been rejected should be included, the theology of divine acceptance has broken down the distinction between God's kingdom and this world in a peculiar form of liberation theology. The goal of this seeking "peace and justice" has been to create God's kingdom on earth, that place where all people would be accepted and affirmed as they were. This theology of acceptance has not seen this world as so broken by human sin that God has had to bring forth a new creation. It has had no room for Luther's prayer in the "Small Catechism" that "at our last hour (God) would graciously take us from this world of sorrow to Himself in heaven."

Inclusive social justice has been made the sole and sufficient content of Christianity in the "other" gospel.

Despite its completely foreign nature, this new gospel has made massive inroads in the ELCA in these past 20 years. It was the reason why, after years of study, debate and discussion, there was and could be no agreement on God's will for sexuality. As Turner wrote, "This isn't an ethical divide about the rightness or wrongness of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. It's a theological chasm—one that separates those who hold a theology of divine **acceptance** from those who hold a theology of divine **redemption**."

Under the gospel of inclusion, approval of homosexual behavior and of responses to

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("Get along..." Continues from page six)

every other desire makes perfect sense. To love ourselves and others would demand such acceptance, even if it required ignoring or arguing away the Bible and Christian teaching.

On the other hand, the traditional theology of divine redemption reaches the opposite conclusion, that we are called to deny ourselves and our desires and to seek ardently, in Christian freedom, to live according to God's will as revealed in Scripture.

However, the influence of this new gospel has reached far beyond the sexuality debates. It has driven a number of new and disturbing trends within Christianity. Among them have been:

- **the claim that the Holy Spirit is doing new things today, apart from or even against the Bible;**
- **an understanding of worship as "our sacrifice of praise" to God, rather than God's justifying Word forgiving sinners and creating them anew;**
- **a denial of the ongoing presence and power of sin in the lives of believers;**
- **an assumption that law and Gospel are opposed to one another, with the Gospel eradicating the law, rather than the law being God's Word that condemns sinners in order to raise them to new life;**
- **an obsessive focus on baptism, not as dying and rising with Christ, but as an initiation rite that guarantees our complete and eternal acceptance by God;**
- **invitations to un-baptized people to receive the Lord's Supper, reducing it to the level of hospitality;**
- **a theology of universal salvation that declares that God uncondi-**

tionally accepts all people and that Jesus is but one way to discover God's acceptance;

- **pastoral care that urges people to affirm themselves as they are, rather than pointing them to the cross, declaring forgiveness of sin and urging them to live according to God's will and not their own.**

These and other innovations, which are so strikingly different from the Christian Gospel as we have long known it, all stem from or reflect this new gospel that would reduce God's saving, transforming love to mere welcome and affirmation. This new and different gospel has been very deceptive because, on the surface, it has sounded so good. It has been warm and welcoming. It has been concerned for the suffering. It has wanted to right wrongs. It has used familiar Christian and Lutheran language—baptism, forgiveness, love, freedom, law, Gospel.

Its only shortcoming is the crucial one—it is untrue.

Its appealing facade has kept many faithful Christians from seeing how it has subtly distorted the familiar terms it has used. It has given traditional Christian language a completely different meaning that has contradicted the very truth it was designed to communicate. It has confused people longing to hear the good news of the Gospel. They often have known instinctively that they were hearing a counterfeit, but have not always been able to articulate its deficiencies over against those who preached it; and many have come to believe that their own understandings must have been wrong. Its insidious nature brings to mind Jesus' haunting words, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6)

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“Get along...” Continues from page seven)

As these two gospels duel for the soul of the ELCA, the response of many of its leaders has been an appeal to the unity we supposedly share in it. This life-and-death battle has been portrayed as merely a differ-

“How long will
you go limping
with two different
opinions? If the
Lord is God,
follow him;
but if Baal,
then follow him.”
(I Kings 18:21)

ence of interpretation, as a healthful diversity that opened the ELCA to hear all voices, as a type of family squabble that should not have been allowed to threaten the unity of the denomination.

But can there be unity; indeed, should there be unity in a church where two contrary gospels are being proclaimed? Paul left no doubt in his letter to the Galatians: “Even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!” (Galatians 1:8) As long as the ELCA tries to accommodate two different gospels, it will never be united, it will never be at peace and it will never settle the issues, such as sexuality, that vex it.

On Mt. Carmel, Elijah exhorted the people of Israel, “How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” (I Kings 18:21) A similar call confronts the ELCA today. If we intend to be a Christian church, we cannot continue limping with two different gospels. We can take our stand at the foot of the cross or we can follow a different gospel that has been foisted upon us by some in the church, but we cannot do both. ♦

(“Sinners!...” Continues from page four)

which is working for inclusiveness. He also moved to replace the word “repentance” with “faith” and said that humankind was not saved by repentance, but by faith.

Riley’s amendment passed 531 yes and 451 no.

King’s gutted amendment was defeated with a vote of 296 yes and 725 no. ♦

(“Ordinations...” Continues from page eleven)

exception this year in the South Dakota Synod and was called to First Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, S.D. The first ordination done under the 2001 bylaw in the Northeast Minnesota Synod, which has been reported to WordAlone, was that of Pastor Carl Fiskness who is pastoring at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Brookston, Minn., and at Faith Lutheran Church in Culver, Minn. ♦

Lutheran CORE, WordAlone initiate work this fall for possible 2009 assembly votes on gay agenda

by Betsy Carlson, editor

While the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Churchwide Assembly chose not to change present ordination and ministry standards, which presently require homosexual ministers to remain celibate, its voting members suggested an accommodation for those already violating them.

The assembly passed a resolution suggesting to “bishops, synods and the presiding bishop” that they go easy on disciplining any congregations that have called practicing homosexuals to serve them or any ELCA pastors and professional lay ministers in same-sex relationships. The assembly met in early August in Chicago.

Pastor Paull Spring said during an interview in Chicago, “We know that many churches and individuals in the ELCA may be disturbed by this assembly’s action and some will think about leaving. Walking out of the ELCA is not the solution.

“We know the efforts to change the ELCA guidelines will continue. A few bishops are already permitting practicing gays and lesbians to serve as pastors in their synods. Many other bishops, however, will uphold the present guidelines.”

Spring is chair of the Lutheran CORE steering committee, a coalition of several groups, individuals and churches, including the WordAlone Network, for reform within the ELCA.

Pastor Jaynan Clark Eglund, president of WordAlone, said in the same interview, “Our work to witness to the Bible’s authority on these moral issues will go on.

Scripture clearly gives direction on homosexual behavior—it’s a sin, no matter what today’s culture says.”

Spring said, “Instead of leaving the ELCA, we implore members and churches to send representatives to our reform gathering on Sept. 28 at Lindenhurst, Ill. At that gathering we will begin to mobilize congregations and members to get more people involved in decision-making in the ELCA

“We reform groups are not the ones who are dividing the ELCA. Those who cannot live with the Scripture’s prohibition of sex outside marriage and with biblical standards are the ones who are dividing the ELCA.”

so that the 2009 churchwide assembly will re-affirm the church’s orthodox position on homosexual relationships.” (The next issue of the Network News will report on the Lindenhurst meeting.)

He continued, “Many ELCA congregations and members will not approve of the Chicago churchwide assembly’s encouragement

to refrain from discipline. There is, however, much that ELCA churches can do together that will strengthen our church’s fidelity to Biblical standards of behavior.

“Lutheran CORE seeks to be a voice for the Word of God within our church. We believe our voice is needed now, particularly in the preparation of a proposed social statement on human sexuality. In addition, Lutheran CORE will promote more involvement by more members in the decision-making processes of our church.”

Eglund said, “We reform groups are not the ones who are dividing the ELCA. Those who cannot live with the Scripture’s prohibition of sex outside marriage and with biblical standards are the ones who are dividing the ELCA.” ♦

'Discerning the spirits' is theme of fall theological conference

The theme of the 2007 fall theological conference of the WordAlone Network is "Discerning the Spirits" and the meeting will be Nov 11-13 at First Evangelical Lutheran Church, White Bear Lake, Minn. Watch for more information on registration at www.wordalone.org or in your mail.

Keynote presenters: Dr. Frederick Baltz, Galena, Ill., and Dr. Mickey Mattox, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis.

They will discuss what the work of the Holy Spirit is and what it isn't. Baltz will speak on paradigms (assumptions, concepts and values) in the book of Acts for the Spirit-led church. Mattox will talk about the 16th century Reformation perspective on the work of the Holy Spirit, with a particular review of Martin Luther's struggle with discerning the spirits. ♦

("Discipline..." Continues from page two)

ordination standards, individuals against doing something this year reminded the assembly that ELCA members were not expecting votes on sexuality matters until 2009 and might not react very well at all to changes made this year.

Bishops Roy Riley, chairperson of the ELCA Conference of Bishops, and Theodore Schneider of the Metro Washington, D.C., Synod both said they favored change but said the assembly had to stick with the process for the social statement.

Riley said his synod wanted the change but he was aware there were others who expected to have a social statement in 2009. He said the assembly needed to honor that expectation but added that he hoped in the next 24 months the church would "make space for gays and lesbians with ministry gifts."

Schneider said there were questions about how a decision to make changes would be received by ELCA members.

"We begged our people to walk faithfully with us and to trust us," Schneider said, "I fear we will have trouble in the future when we ask people to trust us if we abort this process."

The assembly did pass a resolution telling the task force to make recommendations on

the homosexuality issues when it presents the proposed social statement in 2009.

The push for change this year may have come out of an apparently well-planned campaign to get homosexual behavior and ordination standards on the agenda of this churchwide assembly, ahead of the 2009 churchwide assembly in Minneapolis.

The effort may have started with an Atlanta, Ga., pastor's confession to his bishop that he, a known homosexual, was in a "committed relationship" with another man. A discipline committee in the Southeastern Synod removed him from the roster of pastors in February but delayed enforcement until after the assembly.

The discipline committee asked local synods to pass resolutions to begin a process to change the standards to allow ordination of practicing gays.

The "referred" resolutions on changing standards and refraining from discipline were drafted by a legislative team of the pro-gay agenda group, Goodsoil, according to the Goodsoil website. Goodsoil defines itself as a "collaboration to overcome the policy and practice of discrimination within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) against lgbt clergy, same-sex marriages and covenanted relationships." (LGBT commonly means lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgendered.) ♦

Ordinations under the 2001 exceptions bylaw stand at 37 in 17 synods

News of seven more ordinations under the 2001 bylaw that allows exceptions to an aspect of Called to Common Mission, the full communion agreement with The Episcopal Church, has come to WordAlone. The bylaw allows new pastors to be ordained by other pastors rather than by bishops as the full communion agreement would require.

Based on information forwarded to WordAlone, there have been 37 ordinations under the bylaw in 17 synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Pastor Jared Rakness was granted an exception in the South Dakota Synod and ordained in 2006, probably the first one in South Dakota. He serves in Elk Point, S.D. at Immanuel Lutheran and at Brule Creek Lutheran churches. He earned his Masters of Divinity at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

The six others we are reporting on here are all graduates of Luther Seminary and were ordained this year.

Two were granted an exception in the Eastern North Dakota Synod. Pastor Christopher Miller was called to Trinity Lutheran Church in Edinburg, N.D. and Pembina Hills Lutheran Church in Mountain, N.D. Pastor Erika Foss was called to Trinity Lutheran Church in Lankin, N.D., and Fordville Lutheran and Quale Lutheran churches in Fordville, N.D.

In the Southwest Minnesota Synod, Pastor Martha Hanson was ordained and was called to Trinity Lutheran Church, Boyd, Minn. Granted an exception in the Saint Paul Area Synod was Pastor Carol Sinykin who is serving at Abiding Savior in Mounds View, Minn.

Pastor Jason Burgraff received an

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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.wordalone.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.

Lutheran Church of the Cross Altoona, Iowa

Position: Coordinator of Youth Ministries.

Contact: Lori Hasenwinkel at lorih0909@msn.com or call the church office, 515-967-4818

St. Paul Lutheran Church Bulverde, Texas

Position: Full-time Pastor.

Contact: Shawn Gunder at 830-885-4430 or slunder@hotmail.com

Grace Lutheran Church Huntington Beach, California

Position: Director of Children's Ministry.
Contact: Carole Ryan at 562-597-3757, 562-889-9442 or ryanroost@aol.com

Emmanuel Lutheran Church Tacoma, Washington

Position: Associate Pastor.

Contact: Pastor Jon Sorum at 253-752-3571 or jsorum@emmanuel-tacoma.org, or the call committee chair, Rick Remmert, at 253-503-1891