



LUTHERAN LESBIAN & GAY MINISTRIES

For Immediate Release:

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Chicago Area Church to Host Ordination of Openly Gay Lutheran Pastor

On Saturday, October 21, 2006, Mr. Erik Christensen will be ordained into the ministry of Word and Sacrament in opposition to policies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The ordination service will be held at 2:00 p.m. at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, located at 2649 North Francisco Avenue, in Chicago. This will be the first 'extra-ordinary' ordination in the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the ELCA, and the first installation of an openly gay pastor in an ELCA congregation since the denomination's national assembly refused to rescind the celibacy requirement for sexual minority pastors at its biennial meeting in Orlando, August 2005.

Following the ordination service on Saturday, Erik Christensen will be installed as pastor at St. Luke's at their regular worship service on Sunday, October 22, at 10:30 a.m.

St. Luke's is a small Lutheran congregation in Logan Square in Chicago. At a congregational meeting in mid-September of this year, Bill Keippel who chaired the church's call committee, told the congregation that the committee had selected Erik as the best candidate for the position. "He is extremely well qualified," Keippel said. "We truly believe that he is the right person to lead St. Luke's as our next pastor." The congregation agreed and voted to call Erik.

Originally from Omaha, Nebraska, and raised in Des Moines, Iowa, Erik graduated from Macalester College in 1995. He received his Master of Divinity in 2002 from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta. He then continued his studies at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, where he graduated with a Sacred Theology Master in 2004.

Erik was a part of the ELCA Candidacy process for ordination from 1999 until he was removed in December of 2003. As an openly gay candidate for ordination, Erik joined the Extraordinary Candidacy Project (ECP) in 2005.

The ECP was founded in 1993 as a project of Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministries. The ECP certifies the credentials of openly identified sexual minority pastors and seminarians who are fully qualified for ministry, but who do not wish to keep their sexual orientation secret or hide their committed relationships from ELCA congregations and church leaders.

Except for the celibacy requirement, pastors and seminarians who apply to the ECP must meet the same thorough standards as candidates for ordination in the ELCA.

St. Luke's is the first Lutheran congregation in the Chicago area to call an ECP pastor.

Looking forward to serving, Erik said, "St. Luke's is a church with challenges, one of which is its small and aging membership. But St. Luke's is also a spirit-filled congregation that is seeking to renew itself and grow. It is a congregation committed to its ministry to the community. The diversity in the community is the stuff ministry is made of."

Erik also said, "St. Luke's and I want to work with the other pastors and congregations in the synod, to continue to be part of the ministry, Christ's ministry, to the community and people of Chicago, a ministry we are all entrusted with."

All of the pastors and congregations of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the ELCA have been invited to attend the services of ordination and installation. The public is also invited. **Erik Christensen will be ordained on Saturday, October 21 at 2:00 pm, and installed as St. Luke's pastor on Sunday, October 22 at 10:30 am at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Logan Square, 2649 North Francisco Ave, Chicago, IL 60647.**

Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries (LLGM) was founded in 1989 in response to the ELCA's refusal to allow openly gay and lesbian pastors to serve in the church. The 1990 ordinations of seminary graduates Jeff Johnson, Ruth Frost and Phyllis Zillhart in San Francisco, drew national media attention and began a nationwide movement to provide legal, pastoral and financial support to gay and lesbian pastors who were dismissed from their positions or removed from the ELCA clergy roster.

Over the years, LLGM has provided support to dozens of clergy who find themselves caught in a bind between being honest about their sexual orientation and losing their jobs. LLGM also provides financial and legal assistance to those congregations who support their pastor and risk loss of members and discipline from ELCA bishops.

For more information on Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries visit their web site: www.llgm.org

For more information on the Extraordinary Candidacy Project visit their web site: www.extraordinarycandidacyproject.org

Press Availability

Saturday 1:00-1:30 and 4:00-4:30

Contact Information

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