

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Consortium of San Francisco Lutheran Churches to Ordain a Queer Pastor on November 18th.

A consortium of Lutheran churches in San Francisco are set to ordain an openly queer person to minister to the homeless in San Francisco, in direct conflict with official policies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Christ Church Lutheran, Ebenezer Lutheran, St. Francis Lutheran and St. Mary and St. Martha Lutheran plan to ordain Megan Rohrer on Saturday, November 18th, 2006 in a service to be held at Ebenezer Lutheran Church at 3pm. The action follows the ordination of Erik Christensen that happened on October 21st at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Chicago. Both Eric and Megan were approved for call by the [Extraordinary Candidacy Project](#) (ECP).

The Rev. Jeff R. Johnson, pastor of University Lutheran Chapel of Berkeley and president of the Extraordinary Candidacy Project, remarks: "I thank God for Megan and for the courageous witness of Bay Area Lutherans! Megan is a wonderfully gifted candidate for ordination and will make a terrific Lutheran pastor."

On August 27th, Ebenezer became the first congregation to vote to call Megan. Like most ELCA congregations that have called ECP roster members, Ebenezer is one of [Lutherans Concerned/North America's Reconciling in Christ](#) congregations. This vibrant parish in the heart of San Francisco is known for its cutting edge ministry and "re-imagining" what it means to be church. With its focus on feminism and gender, this congregation is an excellent match for Megan theologically.

Megan explains, "As an extraordinary candidate for ministry, I feel that my access and privilege oblige me to speak openly about the queerness of scripture on behalf of and for the sake of my queer kin. This does not mean talking about queer things all the time, or that I minister only to or for queer people. Rather, it means that I am called to be honest not only about my own queer gender and sexuality, but also about the diverse sex, gender and sexuality constructions in scripture, the nature of God and in the body of Christ."

On January 20th 1990, St. Francis and First United became the first congregations to defy the ELCA, when they called and ordained Ruth Frost, Phyllis Zillhart and Jeff Johnson. On January 22nd the ELCA filed charges against St. Francis and First United which lead to the expulsion of both congregations from the ELCA.

In the 16 years that have past since the ordination of Frost, Zillart and Johnson, the ELCA's discipline of churches who call sexual minority pastors has been very inconsistent. For example, in 1997, the Rev. Steven P. Sabin was tried and defrocked

because of his partnership while serving at Lord of Life Lutheran in Ames, Iowa. Yet, no disciplinary action was taken in 2001 when Rev. Sabin accepted an illegal and "irregular" call to Christ Church.

Rohrer's ordination comes after the ELCA completed a four year process of "study and discernment" in preparation for a vote in August of 2005 on the issues of gay clergy and same-sex blessings. At that time, the church voted not to change its official church policy allows lesbian or gay persons to serve only if they take a vow of celibacy. However, in response to the policy of the national church, the Sierra Pacific Synod voted at their 2006 synod assembly to commend "the office of the Bishop of this Synod for its exercise of the discretion explicitly granted by the ELCA's governing documents, and encourages that the Bishop's office continue to be guided by restraint in the administration of those policies only applicable to sexual minority rostered persons" (resolution 06-06).

It is unclear how the Bishop will respond to the congregations that are calling Rohrer and ordaining her. The Bishop may choose restraint, or to follow the lead of Bishop Ron Warren of Southeastern Synod, who has filed formal charges against out [Pastor Bradley Schmeling](#) on August 8, 2006 for "behavior incompatible with the character of the ministerial office."

Rev. Johnson sees Megan's ordination as another opportunity for Lutherans to confront the policy this policy. "Megan's ordination not only bears witness to her gifts, it is also a strong repudiation of the policy of discrimination and forced celibacy that continues to captivate most Lutherans throughout the United States and the ELCA. I hope that more and more Lutherans will see fit to ignore this policy and find extraordinary ways to circumvent it."

PRESS:

Megan and members of the calling churches will be available for comment 30 minutes before the service and for 30 minutes after the service.

ORDINATION & INSTALLATION:

3:00 p.m. Saturday, November 18th, Ebenezer Lutheran Church, 678 Portola Dr.

GALA FOR THE WELCOME MINISTRY:

6:30 p.m. Saturday, November 18th, Christ Church Lutheran, 1090 Quintara Street.

MORE DETAILS:

www.welcomeministry.org (Click on the ordination link at the top of the page.)

or: ecpsems.org/rohrer (Megan Rohrer's Ordination Homepage)

or: Welcome Ministry office telephone: (415)776-5552x310 (between 11am and 5pm pacific time)

CONTACT INFORMATION

Megan Rohrer: 415-827-2587

Ebenezer Contact: The Rev. Stacy Boorn; 415-731-6470

Christ Church Lutheran contact: The Rev. Steven P. Sabin; 415-664-0915

St. Francis Contact: The Rev. Dr. Robert Goldstein; 415-621-2635