

## Note from Executive Director

This has been a dizzying season in the history of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries. It has felt like a rollercoaster at times as we inch up towards the possibility of tremendous change, not sure if the journey will send us soaring onward, or crashing off the rails.

The fall has been filled with profound and life-giving moments, such as when Pastor Erik Christensen was invited to address the Conference of Bishops. It has been filled with deceptively mundane, but truly life-changing, moments such as procedural votes on documents that devoted LGBT advocates from LC/NA and Goodsoil spent hours working on. It has been filled with spiritual moments such as a morning during the Conference of Bishops when we stood with the bishops and staff of the ELCA and sang, slowly, achingly, plaintively, "Give me Jesus."

During this time of change, and wonder and joy there is still much work to be done. The core mission of ELM does not change—we seek to continue to expand ministry opportunities for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pastors. In some instances, that will mean supporting those on our roster who seek to join the ELCA roster and those who plan to stay only on the ELM roster. Serving our mission also means that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people following a call to ministry will continue to need support during candidacy, seeking calls and in ministry settings. In this new ELCA landscape, this work expands as more LGBT people follow a call to ministry. Serving our mission means we will continue to provide funding for LGBT-led ministry. We can only do this with your support. Thank you for your continued and sustaining generosity! What do YOU see as ELM's mission in this changing church? Drop me a line or call me—I'd love to hear from you.

*Amalia*



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THE NEWSLETTER OF EXTRAORDINARY LUTHERAN MINISTRIES

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twitter.com/ELM2649 and don't forget to check out our blog at [www.extraordinarylutheranministries.blogspot.com](http://www.extraordinarylutheranministries.blogspot.com)



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## Witnessing Changes

What a time as we witness the significant changes in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The early April ELCA Church Council meeting brought about historic changes. The ELCA made large steps towards implementing the actions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. These changes open the door for people in same-sex relationships to serve as rostered leaders in the ELCA.

ELM wrote in a statement following the Church Council meeting, "Twenty years ago two ELCA congregations, St. Francis Lutheran Church and First United Lutheran Church, broke with ELCA policy to call an openly gay man, Jeff Johnson, and two openly lesbian women, Ruth Frost and Phyllis Zillhart. The actions of these congregations and pastors began a movement now known as Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries. Their vision has made it possible for dozens of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people to follow a call to ministry. It is a joyful time in the church as the ELCA opens wider its doors to the fullness of God's creation"

These historic steps are the culmination of hard work, witness and vision by supporters like you, and all those who have worked through organizations such as Lutherans Concerned/North America, Goodsoil, Lutheran Network for Inclusive Vision, Wingspan Ministry,

Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries and others. It also includes many people and families who endured personal hardship and struggle. It includes many members and leaders within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The previous policies of discrimination are gone and in their place is the hope of continued reconciliation so that all may truly feel welcome in the Lutheran Church and that with each day we may come closer to seeing each other as the beloved people of God.

Read on to see what all these changes mean for ELM, ELCA and the church—and what work lies ahead.



ELM Pastors, spouses and others gather for the 2010 ELM Roster Retreat.



## ELM in the Beginning Video

Visit [youtube.com/elmvideo](http://youtube.com/elmvideo) to see a great 9.5 minute short film, “In the Beginning,” produced by filmmaker Pam Walton. The moving clip shows rare footage of the first extraordinary ordinations. A great tool to share with friends. 🍌

## Widening the Welcome



Sierra Pacific Synod ELM roster members.

The results of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly actions are widening the welcome in numerous ways.

In April, Bishop Gerald Mansholt, Central States Synod lifted the censure of Abiding Peace Lutheran Church in Kansas City, Missouri (led by Rev. Donna Simon, ELM). Next, Bishop Peter Rogness, St. Paul Area Synod, lifted the censure of St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minnesota (led by Rev. Anita Hill, ELM). In a very moving and dramatic end to his bishop’s report at the Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly, Bishop Mark Holmerud lifted the censure of University Lutheran Chapel in Berkeley, CA (led by Rev. Jeff Johnson, ELM). These censures were all put in place because the congregations called ELM roster members. In each instance, the censures were lifted with words of praise from their synodical bishops for their witness and ministry.

Other actions at the Sierra Pacific Synod assembly included overwhelming support for a resolution to empower the synod council to recognize St. Francis Lutheran Church and First United Lutheran Church as ELCA congregations. These congregations were removed from the ELCA roster in 1995 after calling Jeff Johnson, Ruth Frost and Phyllis Zillhart as pastors.

Other congregations and pastors who have not been affiliated with ELM, but who were also disciplined because of the ELCA’s former policy barring non-celibate gay and lesbian pastors, have also received good news in recent week. In May, Bishop Edward Benoway of the Florida-Bahamas Synod lifted the censure of Abiding Savior Lutheran Church and Rev. Bradley Schmeling, Rev. Darin Easler and Rev. Mary Albing were officially reinstated and recognized as ELCA pastors.

visit and give online at [www.elm.org](http://www.elm.org)

## Supporter Profile:

Tim Schanep and Tony Garcia, members of Grace Lutheran Church in Evanston, IL, are committed to making the church more welcome to all, especially gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. Two years ago, that commitment led them to start volunteering for ELM. Tim chaired the planning committee for the 2009 Chicago Gala, Dazzling Bouquet. Tim & Tony both donated multiple weekends and many hours working towards the success of the event.

Tim & Tony met in New Orleans and lived there for a number of years, and moved to Chicago to help family. They became involved in ELM when their congregation started a group to educate themselves on the issues of equality for those called to serve the church. The first person who spoke at their group was ELM co-chair and roster member Erik Christensen. Next was ELM executive director Amalia Vagts.

Tim became passionate about ELM’s mission because he hopes “that all will be allowed to fulfill their callings in an honorable way, as they feel is appropriate for them. With all benefits of service being shared equally; with the ability to serve at God’s table as all others.”

When asked why Tim & Tony give their time to helping ELM’s cause, they replied, “It is the right thing to do. To make sure all are welcome and allowed to put their faith into action in the way they need to.”

Tim & Tony will be celebrating their 18 years of commitment with a wedding ceremony this fall. They continue to spread news of the work ELM is doing and plan to continue to support GLBT ministry for years to come. 🍌



Tim Schanep, Tony Garcia and Coco

## Reception and Reinstatement!

The actions at the April Church Council meeting cleared the way for ELM pastors seeking reception or reinstatement to the ELCA roster. “Reception” is the pathway for pastors extraordinarily ordained or coming from other Lutheran denominations and “reinstatement” is the pathway for those previously rostered with the ELCA. At press time for this newsletter, about one-fifth of the ELM roster has received final approval to join the ELCA roster. We’ll have full details of these stories in upcoming ELM communications.

Each pastor begins by working with a bishop and candidacy committee in an ELCA synod. Once approved, the ELM pastors are eligible for call in the ELCA. Those who are already serving ELCA calls will continue where they are serving. This process will include liturgical services for some, including a service of Reception for extraordinarily ordained pastors and services of reconciliation. ELM pastor Erik Christensen was invited by the ELCA to be part of the liturgical review of the Rite of Reception. We will be notifying ELM supporters of these services via our eNewsletter list and blog (visit [www.elm.org](http://www.elm.org) to join our email list).

ELM is working closely with the ELCA and ELM candidates to ensure a process that is hospitable, smooth, transparent, and reconciliatory. Your support of ELM allows us to continue to do this work. 🍌

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