

From the Executive Director Amalia Vagts:

This first MISSION of 2010 reminds me of the joy I felt when I first began serving in this position. This fall has had its share of anxiety. The votes at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly was a moment of joy for many who have long worked for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Lutheran people, including those called to serve as Lutheran pastors. Some people have assumed that ELM rostered pastors were immediately welcomed to the ELCA Roster once the policy barring their service was removed. In fact, the ELCA is still determining the process by which ELM pastors will be welcomed. Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries is advocating for a process that is compassionate and welcoming, and recognizes the faithful service of pastors rostered with Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries.

Randy Presuhn's reflection reminds me that from the very beginning, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries has always placed ministry first. St. Francis Lutheran and First United Lutheran were pioneering churches in this movement. They responded to a need in their community and sought openly gay and lesbian pastors to serve their congregations. Over twenty ELCA congregations have followed suit, expanding their welcome to include people of all sexualities and genders. While some in the ELCA have for years debated policies which create the kind of barriers Jesus Christ came to remove, others have moved forward to embrace the gifts of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender pastors. Because the path is still not clear for LGBT pastors, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries continues to approve candidates for ministry. The recently approved candidates we mention in this MISSION, Julie, Matt and Vince are gifted leaders eager to serve in the Church. Your continued support of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries makes it possible for us to do what we have done for the past twenty years—expand ministry opportunities for people of all sexualities and genders called to serve as Lutheran pastors.

Thank you for all you do.



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THE NEWSLETTER OF EXTRAORDINARY LUTHERAN MINISTRIES

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Your Gifts at Work

Thanks to your support, ELM gives grants to fund ELM-led ministries each year. ELM will fund the following ministries through the Mission Partners program. Our 2010 Mission Partner grants total \$61,500. Each year, a group of volunteers led by Margaret Moreland (Mission Partners Chair) selects the grant recipients. Here are excerpts from interviews with the grant recipients explaining their work, goals and how the ELM grants impact their ministry:



Eco Faith Project- Portland, OR: \$20,000

Rev. Robyn Hartwig, founder, writes: "EcoFaith Recovery Ministries fosters spiritual recovery from the corporate addiction to consumerism. Eco-spiritual recovery is facilitated by spiritual recovery groups, retreats, workshops, innovative worship, preaching, Biblical reflection, spiritual practices, and pilgrimages to reconnect with the natural world."

WELCOME—San Francisco, CA: \$11,500 (empowerment) and \$6,000 (sabbatical)

Rev. Megan Rohrer, executive director, writes: "Education is the root of everything we do at Welcome. In addition to preaching and teaching about poverty at more than 56 congregations, organizations and schools each year, Welcome provides skill share classes for our homeless and marginally housed guests. We also have a community gardening program."

St. Luke's Lutheran Church of Logan Square—Chicago, IL: \$9,000

Rev. Erik Christensen writes: "St. Luke's is a congregation in redevelopment, and we have experienced strong growth in both membership and involvement over the last three years. Early on in our redevelopment we identified two areas for mission and outreach to the community - music & community arts, and healing & healthcare. By partnering with neighborhood organizations and community members, we've been able to expand programming in each of these areas."

Grace Lutheran Church—Houston, TX: \$15,000

Rev. Lura Groen writes: "This year we will open the doors of Montrose GracePlace. GracePlace is a safe, welcoming environment for vulnerable homeless youth of all sexualities and genders, providing nourishment, healthy relationships, and hope for the future. We'll start with an evening once a week: dinners, drama-healing creative activities such as creative writing workshops and drum circles, and hopefully showers and laundry."

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20 Years of Ministry

January 20, 2010 marks the 20th Anniversary of the first extraordinary ordinations. On that day, the church affirmed the calls of Rev. Ruth Frost, Rev. Phyllis Zillhart and Rev. Jeff Johnson. This historic moment was the result of the actions of two congregations, St. Francis Lutheran Church and First United Lutheran Church. The ordinations took place on January 20, 1990 at St. Paulus Lutheran Church in San Francisco. The ceremony was attended by over 1000 persons, with participation by over 70 clergy members. An additional 700 persons attended seven simultaneous worship services throughout the country.

*Behold,
I am doing
a new thing!*

At the time of the ordinations, over 425 people signed a covenant of support. One section of this covenant read, "At this moment in the history of our church, we, the undersigned, feel conscience bound to take action in support of gay men and lesbian women who are qualified for ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." 🍓

New ELM Roster Members

ELM announces that three new people have been added to the ELM Roster. Julie Boleyn and Matt James have been approved for ordination and Rev. Vince Lavieri has been received as a transfer pastor. We are energized by these gifted leaders and all they will bring to the Lutheran church! Julie and Matthew's approval is contingent on completion of the Masters of Divinity degree later this spring.

Julie Boleyn. Julie is a senior at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. She interned at United in Faith Lutheran Church in Chicago last year. Julie and her partner, Jeanie Reardon recently celebrated the first birthday of their daughter, Madelyn.

Matthew James. Matthew is a senior at Lutheran School of Theology at Philadelphia. Matthew's fiancé, John Weit, is the Music Director at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Worcester, MA.

Vince Lavieri. Pastor Vince is a transfer candidate from the United Church of Christ. Pastor Vince previously served in the Lutheran Church of America, and transferred to the UCC when he was banned from serving because of his sexual orientation.

Very Special Gifts

GRANT

ELM has been named the recipient of a \$20,000 E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation grant. The grant will fund operation of our Chicago office and a DVD project. ELM gives thanks to the Carpenter Foundation for supporting our operational needs during this transitional time for our organization!

BEQUEST

ELM also received a bequest from the estate of Rev. Paul and Monita Jorstad. This is the first bequest for Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries. The gift will go to the ELM Endowment Fund and for special projects in 2010.

The Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries Endowment Fund was created in 2008 to provide lasting funding for ministry by openly gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Lutheran pastors. You can make direct gifts to the ELM Endowment Fund, or name the Endowment Fund in your legacy giving plans. If you plan to leave gift to ELM in your will, contact Amalia so you can share how you would like your gift to be used. Amalia can be reached at 563-382-6277 and director@elm.org. 🍓

Donor Profile: Randy Presuhn Writes About ELM

[Epistle - I Corinthians 13]

"Therefore we are unwilling to assent to their abominable celibacy." [Smalcald XI]
"We ourselves will and ought to ordain suitable persons to this office." [Smalcald X]

Strong words. But for the work of ELM, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, they are as true and as relevant now as they were when Martin Luther wrote them some 473 years ago.

It would have been nice if our work had been finished with the stroke of a pen at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly last summer. But the logistics of change are seldom so tidy, and we cannot put ministry on hold while working out the organizational details.

Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries grew out of the dual need to provide an orderly credentialing process for LGBT Lutheran Pastors, and to help support the congregations calling them. What I'd like to do today is provide a glimpse into just one of those ministries we help support.

In the fall of 2006, with an average worship attendance of 13, St. Luke's Lutheran Church of Logan Square in Chicago wasn't expected to survive. But through the Holy Spirit, extreme times can open us to extreme possibilities. They took a hard look at who they were, who they were called to be, and who they were called to serve. They called ELM-rostered Pastor Erik Christensen. They arrived at a statement of purpose: "claimed in promise, equip St. Luke's for loving service." Pastor Erik writes:

That service takes many forms. It is found in words of Law and Gospel proclaimed weekly in word and sacrament to those who gather for worship. It is experienced by those who meet here four nights a week for Narcotics Anonymous meetings. It is evident in the growing numbers of families who bring their children to our early childhood music education program, or who take yoga or tai chi in our health and fitness studio. It is perhaps most obvious to the more than five hundred families who rely on us each month for food through our pantry. The community we serve is the community of Logan Square - both those who worship with us, and those neighbors whose needs we meet with loving service.

St Luke's is still a work in progress. Though attendance has more than tripled and their financial health greatly improved, they still need some assistance. But, as Pastor Erik writes: "Growth isn't simply numbers... It's also about the deepening commitment members of this community have to one another and to their relationship with God, their journeys of discipleship." Today's reading from I Corinthians 13 reminds us that *why* we serve is crucial: no matter how outwardly successful or self-sacrificing, a ministry not springing from love and the Gospel is just noise.

Working on ELM's grant-making committee, the "Mission Partners Ellipse," has been a real blessing for me. The ELCA's tagline "God's work, our hands" has been evident again and again in the ministries we've assisted. Our financial support gives them a little breathing room, and provides tangible reassurance that they're not alone. But the love manifest in the ministry and growth of these congregations is beyond anything money could buy. Our hands might be there, but I'm convinced the work is God's.

Randy Presuhn is a long-time ELM supporter and a volunteer for the Mission Partners Ellipse. Randy shared these words at Christ the Good Shepherd in San Jose, CA, his home congregation. Randy and his partner, Timothy Nguyen, live in San Jose. 🍓



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