

The Newsletter *

(*Until a name/logo is chosen!!!)

"Giving Voice to Vision in the San Francisco/Greater Bay Area!"

Vol 1: No 5

July 1989

A Flood of Support Letters Needed St. Paul and St. Francis begin process to call pastors

On Sunday, June 12, two congregations voted to begin the process of calling openly lesbian and gay pastors. St. Francis Lutheran Church (S.F.) and St. Paul Lutheran Church (Oakland) voted at congregational meetings following Sunday morning services to form call committees and to begin the process of identifying, interviewing and choosing candidates to become pastors at these churches.

At the congregational meetings, each congregation was asked to vote on the following two resolutions. Both congregations passed the resolutions with majority votes.

"Resolved, that (name of congregation) affirm it's support and partnership with the Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministry."

"Resolved that (name of congregation) initiate the constitutional process for seeking candidates for call to the pastor office who will serve (name of congregation) and the Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministry, and to this end, authorized the Church Council 1) to appoint a Call Committee, 2) to enter into negotiations with the Lutheran Lesbian and

Gay Ministry on the shape of this pastor's ministry and responsibilities."

Both are Reconciled In Christ (RIC) congregations and many members in each congregation see participation with the Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministry to be the significant "next step" in their own congregation's witness toward the lesbian/gay community in this area.

The two pastors called will work part-time in the parish to which each is called and spend a majority of their time developing and working with the Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministry. Jeff Johnson will be the gay male candidate recommended to one of these congregations. Resumes have been solicited and collected from a number of lesbian women interested in a position with the ministry. Among the resumes submitted, are some from ordained ELCA women clergy. An announcement on candidates for the

ministry should be available shortly. "Stay tuned!"

As these congregations proceed with this very important process, they need our support! What do we need you to do? **Flood them now with positive, supportive mail!** Write to the members of St. Francis and St. Paul with your support for their decisions. Tell them why you believe this action is needed! Let them know that as they put themselves on the line for social justice, they will not be standing alone. We will stand together with them!

Sit down and write your support to:

Members
St. Francis Lutheran Church
152 Church Street
San Francisco, CA 94114

Members
St. Paul Lutheran Church
1658 Excelsior
Oakland, CA 94602

The LUTHERAN LESBIAN & GAY MINISTRY is an emerging coalition of lay individuals, clergy, congregations and other communities of faith committed to the Gospel, to lesbian/gay ordained pastoral leadership and to progressive ministry with, by and for the lesbian/gay community.

Mailing Address:

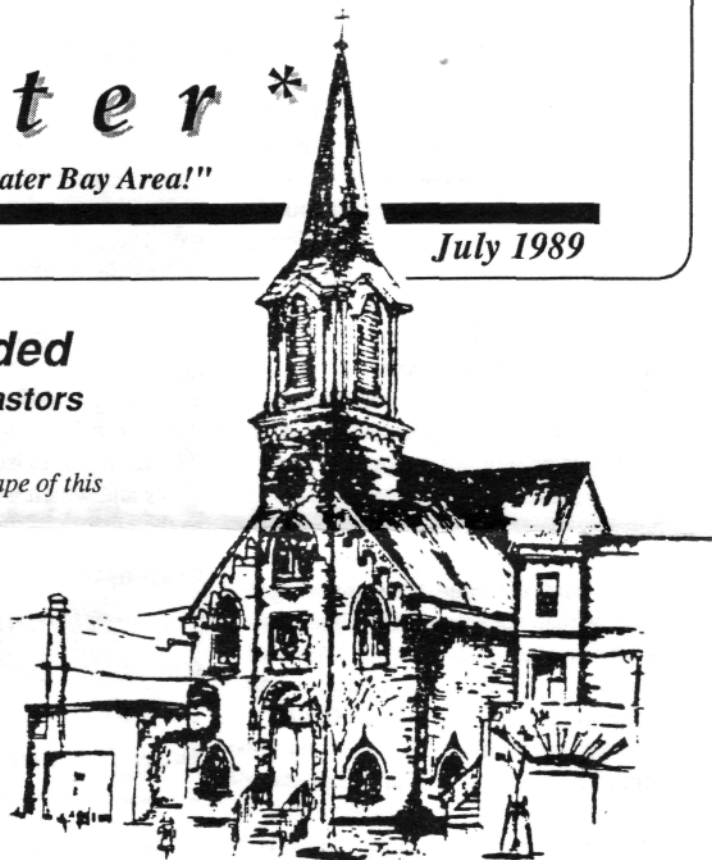
LUTHERAN LESBIAN & GAY MINISTRY
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Ms. Sherry Mattson	Rev. James DeLange
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All Those Lutheran Reformers!!

Some thoughts on ordination from an historical perspective

For both those who have signed or have not signed the *Covenant of Support*, a great deal of theological thought has been going on about the issue of ordination in the ELCA. What is ordination? Who ordains? Is the presence of a bishop **always necessary** for an ordination to be valid? What are the proper responses to a policy of ordination judged imprudent and unjust? If some regard a policy of the church to be wrong and unjust and in good conscience cannot uphold or lend credence to such a policy, should not the church respect, support and affirm such a decision?

These and other questions are being raised as plans develop for ordinations/installations this fall emerging out of an understanding of ordination based on an appeal to the historic Lutheran Confessions and not simply rooted in a commitment to ELCA constitution and polity.

It may be helpful to remember that questions around ordination, especially as they relate to who is ordained and by whom, are nothing new to the Lutheran Church.

In the 16th century, as the Protestant Reformation gained speed, the papacy became less and less willing to ordain "Lutheran" pastors. What were the reformers to do? R. Don Wright, PLTS seminarian and a member of our Theological Task Force went to the library armed with this question and began digging through historical documents. He offers up to us for reflection, the following historical Lutheran viewpoints.

The Newsletter is published monthly by the LUTHERAN LESBIAN & GAY MINISTRY of the San Francisco/Greater Bay Area.

The mailing list for *The Newsletter* is composed of individuals who have themselves indicated interest as well as those who have been recommended for inclusion to us. If you have names to add or wish to be dropped from the mailing list, please let us know and the appropriate changes will be made.

The Newsletter is edited each month by Paula Fredrickson and Jeff Johnson. Letters to the Editors are welcome and will be printed as space permits. Copyright © 1989 LUTHERAN LESBIAN & GAY MINISTRY. Permission is granted to reproduce sections from *The Newsletter* with appropriate credit.

1. "The bishops might easily retain the obedience of persons if they did not insist on the observance of regulations which cannot be kept without sin. . . . Again, they forbid clergy to marry and admit no one to the ministry unless he first swears an oath that he will not preach this doctrine, although there is no doubt that it is in accord with the holy Gospel. . . . Our churches . . . ask only that the bishops **relax certain unreasonable burdens** which did not exist in the church in former times and which were introduced contrary to the custom of the universal Christian

We are bound to follow the apostolic rule which commands us to obey God rather than human beings.

church. Perhaps there was some reason for introducing them, but they are not adapted to our times. Nor can it be denied that some regulations were adopted from want of understanding. Accordingly the bishops ought to be so gracious as to temper these regulations inasmuch as such changes do not destroy the unity of the Christian churches. For many regulations devised by human beings have with the passing of time fallen into disuse and are not obligatory, as papal law itself testifies. If, however, this is impossible and they cannot be persuaded to mitigate or abrogate human regulations which are not to be observed with sin, we are bound to follow the apostolic rule which commands us to obey God rather than human beings."

The Augsburg Confession, Art. XXVIII, The Book of Concord.
(emphasis added.)

2. Luther wrote that "where episcopal ordination was becoming fraught with great difficulties, (the Utraquists of Bohemia) should select qualified persons to be ordained as ministers. . . . If papal

bishops would not ordain ministers of the Word for them, **an assembly of clergy must elect** those fit to be ministers or bishops and commend them to the whole church to be recognized as ministers of the Word and bishops, else their church perish. . . . **They need have no scruples about such actions; they are the church, for the church consists in the Word of God and knowledge of Christ, not in outward customs.**

In a sermon of 1524, Luther observes that as "time moves on, it will be necessary to ordain evangelical pastors. . . . The evangelical ministers, having the power of the Word, should select qualified persons, and give to them the authority to preach the Word and distribute the sacraments."

The Historic Episcopate and the Lutheran Confessions,
by Prof. R. Goesser,
***Lutheran Quarterly*, Winter 1988.**
(emphasis added.)

3. "As a final step, at Luther's behest the elector decreed in 1535 that anyone who wished to become a pastor but had no bishop to ordain him should present himself to the Wittenberg theological faculty for examination and ordination."

***Luther the Reformer*, by James M. Kittelson, Augsburg, 1986. p. 249.**
(emphasis added.)

4. "All of us who have been baptized are priests without distinction, but those whom we call priests are ministers, chosen from among us that they should do all things in our name and their priesthood is nothing but a ministry. **The sacrament of ordination, there, can be nothing other than a certain rite of choosing a preacher in the Church.**"

***Here I stand, a Life of Martin Luther*,**
Roland H. Bainton, Abingdon Press,
Nashville, 1950, p. 106. (Emphasis added.)

Congregations Needed to Sign Covenant

Churches to call openly lesbian/gay clergy forming network

Jeff Johnson recently returned from a trip to Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota where he had been invited to preach at St. Paul Reformation Lutheran Church on Lesbian/Gay Pride Sunday. Additionally he met with a number of synodical task forces, Bishop Lowell Erdahl, representatives of other Minnesota Bishop's offices, and spent much time talking with Leo Tredway and Anita Hill of Wingspan, a ministry with, on behalf of and for lesbians, gay men and their families.

An important insight to come out of this trip, was the need to begin to develop a network of congregations and communities throughout the country to stand with St. Francis and St. Paul and to "come out" as ELCA congregations welcoming the opportunity to call openly lesbian women and gay men to be pastors of their churches.

Both St. Francis and St. Paul have begun a process to call openly lesbian/gay pastors. It is now time for other congregations to begin the process of discussion which will enable them to take this very important step.

Is your congregation concerned about justice for lesbian/gay people? Do you welcome lesbian/gay persons into your



worshipping community? Is your congregation a member of the Reconciled In Christ (RIC) program of Lutherans Concerned?

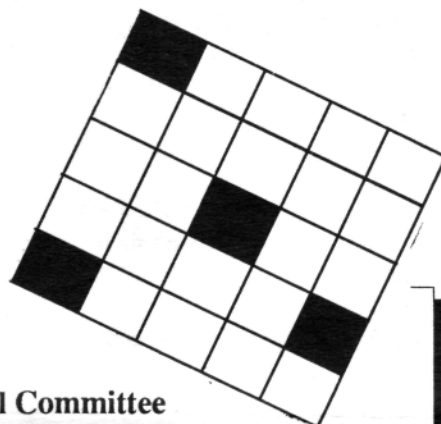
If yes--it is now time to ask if you would welcome being served by a pastor who is openly lesbian or gay?

To come out as a congregation and

support St. Francis, St. Paul and ordained lesbian/gay persons: 1) Pray about, read through, and discuss the *Covenant of Support*. (Copies are available from LLGM). 2) Sign the *Covenant* as a Church Council and as a congregation. 3) In addition to the *Covenant*, write and pass a resolution which reads that your congregation "would like to begin (now or at the time of pastoral vacancy) the process of calling a pastor who is openly lesbian/gay."

Let's begin to develop a network of ELCA congregations who have "come out" with lesbian/gay persons and who will call us to professional pastoral leadership positions.

Pray that persons will be moved to begin these discussions throughout the church—in San Francisco, in Los Angeles, in Chicago, and Minneapolis, in Washington D.C., etc!



The Infamous "Interim Guidelines"

The following are the "Interim Guidelines" promulgated by ELCA church authorities which apply to ordained clergy and candidates alike.

"I. The appropriate setting for sexual intercourse and other erotic expressions of sexual intimacy is marriage. A pattern of behavior that substitutes promiscuous behavior or the sexual abuse of another for that of relationship of commitment and care is conduct that is inappropriate and is reason for a person to be removed from candidacy in the ELCA.

"II. There is a distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual behavior. A pattern of behavior that includes homosexual erotic activity is conduct that is inappropriate and is reason for a person to be removed from candidacy in the ELCA."

(Shame! Shame! Shame!--Ed.)

Calendar

- July 10:** Joint Search/Call Committee Meeting at St. Paul, Oakland (530-6333)
- July 12:** Clergy Signers of the *Covenant* Meeting at St. Paul, Oakland.--11:00 a.m.
• LL&GM Steering Committee Meeting at St. Francis, S.F.--7:00 p.m.
- July 19:** Deadline for Aug Newsletter Articles & Letters "Round the Rug Theology" (aka Dead Theologians Society) 7:00 p.m. Call 824-4498 for details
- August 1:** Salad/Soup/Stuffing Party--6:00 All interested in helping out call 824-4498

Hold Fast to Your Stories: A Call for Public Accountability

The ELCA's participation in anti-lesbian/gay prejudice must end

According to a recent article in the San Francisco *Examiner*, the emotional and physical "bashing" of lesbian and gay persons is "epidemic in this country. Surveys indicate that nearly all gays and lesbian have suffered verbal abuse and as many as one in four gay men and one in ten lesbians have been raped or beaten because of their sexual orientation." (June 7, 1989) In our society, violence against lesbians/gays is a part of reality which must be changed.

This reality of anti-lesbian/gay violence recently hit home for me. Late one evening last week, a block from my apartment, a gay man was attacked and bludgeoned on the street by two "men" wielding baseball bats. According to neighbors, the attackers were scared off, fled and disappeared, while the man survived and was taken to a hospital across town where he is recovering. His blood remains a black stain on the concrete down at the end of the block and is a powerful reminder to me and my neighbors of the crimes of hate and violence perpetrated against lesbians and gay men in our society.

It is a reminder as well of the alarming, often subtle, credence given such behavior by our society and by many of our churches.

Surprise. Surprise. Such violence does not occur by itself in an ideological vacuum. Queer-baiting and fag-bashing feed on the prevailing anti-lesbian/gay attitudes which are legitimized and justified by our own cultural, sociological and theological myths.

Indeed the S.F. *Examiner* story understood well this connection between ideology and physical abuse/violence when it *listed, named and photographed* many of the leading individuals whose ideas, philosophies and statements undergird and create the climate for such physical violence. People like: Anita Bryant, Morton Downey Jr., Jerry Falwell, Judge Jack Hampton, Pope John Paul II, Senator Jesse Helms, Lyndon LaRouche, Eddie Murphy, much of Ronald Regan's administration, and former New York Times chief Abe

Rosenthal. Their ideas, their actions and their statements have contributed directly and indirectly to the abuse and hatred of lesbian/gay persons throughout our society.

One of the most important ways to confront hatred and violence is to **identify it and to name it**. The article was significant precisely because it chose to name and to label the violence itself as well as the perpetrators of the violence. It named—out loud, in public, in the press—individuals responsible for anti-gay/lesbian statements, and labeled these ideas and individuals homophobic and bigoted.

Remember your stories. Label your oppressors and oppressions. Live boldly the Gospel Vision!

It's important to be clear.

- The man walking home that evening earlier this week, was not the offender,---the two thugs who attacked him were.

- "Homosexual erotic activity" is not arbitrarily immoral,---homophobia is the enemy to be fought, challenged and conquered.

- Openly lesbian/gay persons and our relationships are not the problem in the ELCA,--- it is the prevailing attitudes and policies which are unjust and immoral.

Most of us believe reports of violence and hate crimes when they happen on the streets of society. But in the church itself? When Lutherans Concerned/ North America issued a *Call for Repentance* naming and labeling the sins against lesbian/gay persons in the church, it was met with disbelief by many. Some simply could not believe that the injustices named had actually happened in the church. "Surely no one has ever been denied the Sacrament because they're gay." "Attacked from the pulpit? Never?" "We wouldn't exclude a lesbian mother." "Excommunicated or

kicked out of the congregation? No!"

Not only do many not believe that anti-lesbian/gay feelings and violence exist in the church, but we often quickly forget the instances when these injustices have played our publicly for all to see. Before the three seminarians at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary came out as openly gay last spring, we asked about precedents—who had gone before us and what had happened to them.

As far as we were told, there had been no—or relatively few and obscure precedents. "This has simply not happened before." It was not until two of us went to a gathering of Lutheran lesbian/gay men and women in Toronto later that summer, that we actually met and heard of the many "precedents" who had gone before. The stories of these people and the many, many more are ones of lesbian/gay leadership and creativity, seldom celebrated and often abused, stifled, redirected and taunted by institutionalized anti-lesbian/gay prejudice and homophobia. As we proceed, we mustn't forget this past. We mustn't forget that colleagues have been and will continue to be bashed by many of our sisters and brothers who are Lutheran.

We mustn't forget, but we can unite against this violence. We must collect stories from each one another. We must remember the incidents which have happened to all of us. Don't let them become part of the enveloping silence of an obscure history. We must name the perpetrators of oppression and call them out publicly to stand behind their actions. We must above all courageously and in good faith label the oppression and the illnesses which blind so many to the gifted reality of our lives.

Remember your stories. Label your oppressors and oppressions. Live boldly the Gospel Vision!

Jeff Johnson
Mission Developer
Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministry