

The Newsletter *

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

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

Vol 1: No 7

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LLGM's Support Expands **Leo Tredway to organize national network**

Interest in the mission of LLGM continues to grow. Daily, it seems, people from across the country call the office to request information and materials about who we are, and what we are seeking to do. Over the summer Steering Committee members and other volunteers made presentations at clergy conferences, synod assemblies and before various church groups. Last month LLGM greeted delegates to the ELCA's National Assembly in Chicago, and shared a display table with Lutherans Concerned/North America adjacent to the main registration area. Mission Developer Jeff Johnson just returned from speaking engagements in Marquette, Detroit, Milwaukee and Washington, D.C. where he met with college students, local pastors and an ELCA bishop or two. And more invitations are on the way!

Over 350 Covenants of Support have now been signed. And as LLGM makes



plans to launch its program, Lutherans living in other parts of the country have been wondering how they might partici-

pate in the ground-breaking event. Leo Tredway, member of St. Paul Reformation Lutheran in St. Paul, Minnesota, has volunteered to come up with an answer. (Leo is a Ministry Associate with Wingspan, a Lutheran ministry on behalf of lesbian and gay people in the Twin Cities.) In the next few weeks Leo will begin forming a network of individuals, congregations and other supportive communities who are interested in organizing local celebrations to coincide with the inaugural worship service LLGM will be hosting in the Bay Area. Folks in Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Detroit, Washington, D.C., and St. Paul have already expressed interest and we are hoping for many more. If you would like information about events in your area or need some assistance in getting one going, please contact Jeff at the LLGM Office, (415) 824-4498.

Back To School = Closet?

A lesbian seminarian reflects on her future

By Lisa Stenmark

I expected the dreams. I've had them before, I'll probably have them again. You know the one: the place is familiar and yet I'm utterly lost. I wander through murky semi-light, a sense of foreboding and urgency pushing me forward. Suddenly, I spot the door. With a surge of relief, I rush in... too late! The test is over. I guess

it doesn't matter, I forgot to study anyway. I stand there, in my underwear (nobody notices), watching my academic career go down the tubes.

Yes, it's back-to-school time again. After five years of the "real world" and two years part-time at the seminary, I've decided to go full-time. I expected the dreams—they

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LUTHERAN LESBIAN & GAY MINISTRY

LLGM 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.

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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* will be mailed in plain envelopes to persons who request it.

The Newsletter is edited each month by Jeff Johnson and Greg Egertson. An Editorial Board sets policy for the *Newsletter*.

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Mission Developer's Corner

The summer/fall months have been very busy ones for the Steering Committee of LLGM and much has occurred since the last issue of the *Newsletter* reached your house. Here's a quick run down of some of the important events:

- Bishop Chilstrom was out to meet with LLGM in early August. The fact that he choose to visit with us was interesting, but the meeting itself was not all that fruitful! It was clear following the meeting that if ministry with lesbian/gay persons is to happen in the ELCA—it will be because individuals and congregations undertake it. There is no "Chicago plan" (or for that matter an "Oakland plan") for ministry with and by our community!

- I have done much traveling and speaking with people about the mission and plans of LLGM. In early August I was in Los Angeles to speak with Lutherans Concerned/LA; midway through the month I attended the ELCA's National Convention in Chicago; and I just recently returned from a short "tourette" of four cities in the Midwest. The highlight of this last trip was the chance to meet and speak with Dr. Virginia Ramey-Mollenkott at an ELCA conference in Milwaukee--"Reaffirming the Promise: Ministry with and by Lesbian/Gay Persons."

- The process to call two pastors through local congregations to LLGM continues. St. Francis has proceeded by interviewing a number of lesbian women and by setting October 28 as the date when they will vote as a congregation whether to call one of them as associate pastor. In late September, St. Paul's congregation decided to withdraw from the process to extend a call. A process has begun to identify another congregation which may issue a call in the coming months. Pray for both of these congregations as they each continue their unique ministries.

All of this is exciting, but don't let anyone tell you that starting up a new ministry is an easy process. It's even more difficult *without* the support and encouragement of synodical staff and with all of the controversy and subtle homophobia surfaced by our public affirmation of lesbian/gay culture.

The process alone takes a long time. It involves many different people. There are many important and vital decisions to be made. And with the added stress of being somewhat (should I dare say it) "on the cutting edge" of social and church change, this entire process requires much prodding, patience and understanding.

In Milwaukee, Dr. Virginia Ramey-Mollenkott, spoke to the issue of publicly affirming lesbian/gay persons, culture and our own lives. She pointed out that in our society, we each have to decide to *live authentically as full human beings in our public lives, and come out to the greatest extent possible, or conform to society's expectations and retreat into the closet of our private lives.*

Each of us must make these choices. LLGM has had to make this choice. And because LLGM has decided to be fully and completely "out of the closet" and to confront the church and society on their blatantly discriminatory attitudes and structures, both the rewards and the obstacles to our getting started are great.

October 11 was National Coming Out Day, on which lesbians/gay men across the U.S. were challenged to "take the next step" in the process toward self-affirmation and self-acceptance. While most of us may not choose to be lesbian/gay, we do indeed make choices about how we will live our lives, how we will represent our relationships and when, where, to whom, and why we will self-identify and publicly affirm and celebrate our giftedness as lesbians/gay men.

LLGM as an organization has come out and has made a choice to be open and public about its ministry with and by lesbians/gay men. We invite others to be apart of this exciting effort.

Jeff R. Johnson
Mission Developer, LLGM

Chilstrom and Miller Meet With LLGM

Bishops talk candidly about discipline

Following the media publicity in June surrounding the Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministry's proposal to hire openly Lesbian and gay pastors to serve in the Synod of Northern California and Northern Nevada, ELCA Bishop Herbert W. Chilstrom initiated a meeting with members of the LLGM Steering Committee. Despite initial attempts to keep the meeting private, the news quickly spread and LLGM began receiving inquiries from people who wanted to confirm what they had heard. According to one caller, there was even word in Chicago that Bishop Chilstrom was flying out to San Francisco to preside at "an ordination." That was, perhaps, the easiest rumor to dispel.

The meeting took place in Oakland on August 7. Joining Bishop Chilstrom from the ELCA national headquarters was Vice President Christine Grumm. Also attending were Bishop Lyle Miller and NCNN Synod staff, select members of the LLGM Steering Committee and representatives from the two Bay Area congregations who have voted to consider calling and ordaining gay and lesbian clergy. By all reports the meeting was positive in tone, and it succeeded in its purpose of keeping the lines of communication open

and respectful. The meeting also gave those involved opportunity to articulate their motives and document their intended courses of action. To quote a recent report in *Advent*, the quarterly newsletter of Lutherans Concerned/San Francisco, "Information was shared, but no one's mind was changed, nor were any ultimatums delivered."

In the context of the discussion, the Bishops spoke candidly about the possibility of disciplinary action should one or more congregations proceed with plans to call pastoral candidates who have either not been certified by the ELCA or not been approved at the synodical level. To insure due process, various options for discipline would be considered by a special committee comprised of six elected members from the NCNN Synod and six ELCA representatives appointed by the national church. Both the calling congregations and their pastoral leaders would be at risk. In a letter to *Advent* editor, Jim Lokken, dated September 15, Bishop Lyle Miller confirmed this understanding:

"The constitution of the ELCA does indeed indicate that pastors can be removed from the clergy roster of the

Worth Quoting . . .

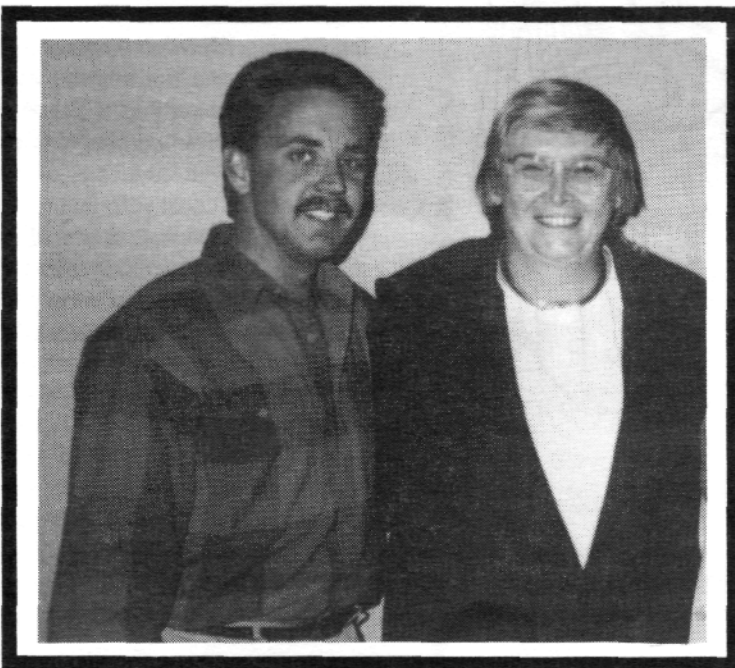
A thought on working within an institution like the ELCA:

"In order to understand the system in which we live and help move it toward recovery, the time has come to admit, without reservation, that it is an addict and functions on a systemic level the same as any decompensating or deteriorating drunk. We must move beyond our participation in this disease process, beyond our denial, and see the elephant in its context for what it is, an Addictive System."

Anne Wilson Schaeff
When Society Becomes an Addict
(Harper & Row, 1987)

church only for reasons of false doctrine or immorality; they can, however, be disciplined for other reasons. The discipline imposed by the ELCA Discipline Committee could take different forms; it cannot, except for false doctrine or immorality, take the form of removal from the roster. As regards the possible discipline of congregations who may be involved in the calling process, they may be removed from the congregational roster of the church. In short, both clergy and congregations may be disciplined for disregarding their constitution. The form or the shape of discipline, however, may vary."

Bishop Miller elaborated on these remarks at meetings with members of the St. Francis Lutheran Church Council on September 19, and before the congregation of St. Paul Lutheran on September 20. When asked to be more specific about the forms of discipline which might be forthcoming against the calling congregations, the NCNN Bishop suggested four possible outcomes. The decision of the ELCA Discipline Committee could result in: no action, a letter of censure, temporary suspension from the ELCA, or removal from membership in the ELCA altogether. Bishop Miller said that he could not predict which outcome would be most probable. And in deference to the ELCA's plan to conduct a five-year study of human sexuality, neither would the bishop speculate on how long current policies toward lesbian and gay clergy might remain in force.



Jeff Johnson, LLGM Mission Developer with Dr. Virginia Ramey-Mollenkott at the conference: "Reaffirming the Promise -- Ministry with and by Lesbian/Gay Persons," held in Milwaukee, WI., September 1989.

Closet continued

were like old friends—but I was surprised by how easy it was to slip into some old familiar patterns. As I began my first days as a full-time seminarian, I suddenly found myself hiding behind closet doors. It's most surprising because my lesbianism is not exactly a secret. I have done a lot of workshops on homosexuality (even at the seminary) and spoken about my lesbianism all over the state, including two synod conventions. Anybody who has been around knows I'm a lesbian. Many of the people at PLTS support the ordination of gay and lesbian people. So why do I suddenly feel the need to hide?

I suppose the problem is that I really do want to be a pastor. But, deep in my heart, I know that I have little chance of being ordained in the Lutheran Church. I cannot accept the injustice of a Church policy that eliminates the possibility for sexual expression and intimacy for gay and lesbian clergy by declaring that it is only "appropriate" within the bounds of a (heterosexual) marriage. I will not play their game and lie and hide who I am. I know that miracles happen, and I hope for the best, but self preservation demands that I expect the worst. Waiting for rejection takes its toll. Inside, I try to protect myself from the hurt that comes with rejection. Part of me accepts the idea that there is something to reject.

Maybe if I lay low for a while they'll forget about me and I'll slip through the cracks. Maybe I can make up for being gay. If I were smarter—got perfect grades and wrote papers filled with astounding theological insight; maybe, if I were a scintillating preacher—chose just the right words and said them in just the right way; if I were more loving, more giving, more compassionate. Maybe if the heavens opened up and a

radiant light followed me everywhere I went. Maybe then the church would forgive this one little thing: who I am.

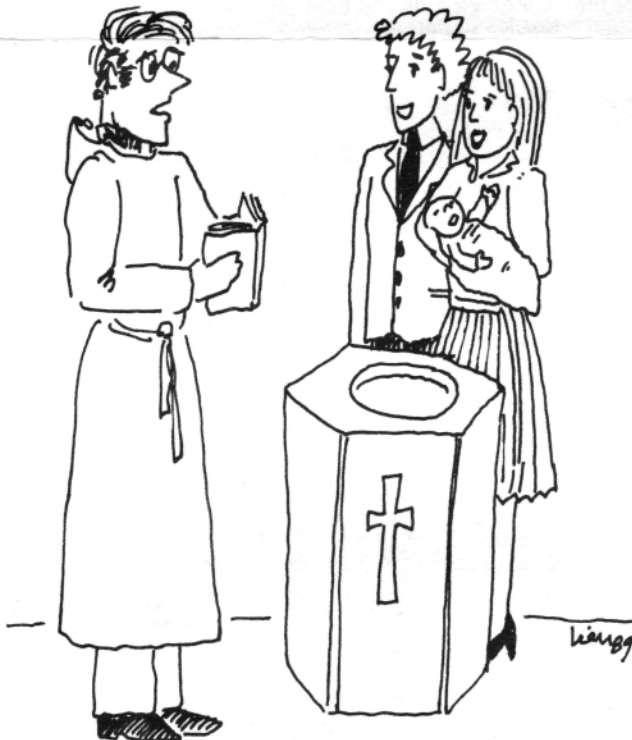
It's so easy to buy into the rejection. It doesn't really matter if its your parents, your friends or just the amorphous blob called humanity. It doesn't matter if its real or imagined: its real enough often enough. Suddenly you're afraid of people; you hide yourself and deny yourself. And I did hide myself, even from those who knew me. I edited my conversations or tried to steer them away from dangerous areas. And I cringed every time the inevitable question came up, "Are you planning on being a pastor?"

I just shrugged and made an off-hand comment. I didn't say what I wanted to say, "No, as a matter of fact, I don't plan on being a pastor. I want to, but I don't plan on it. And no, I don't really want to talk about it, because if I do it will

expose a very sensitive area inside. If I do, you, or somebody else, might think I'm trying to make trouble. If I do, the Proprietary Patrol might notice me and remember that I don't really belong here. No, I don't think I'm paranoid. I just want to behave, so leave me alone, O.K.?" (There are innumerable seminarians who don't know how close they came.)

Driving home across the Bay Bridge, I felt lost and alone and rejected. I was so depressed I wanted to cry. Then it suddenly dawned on me what I was doing. I was letting the church convince me that I was somehow less in the eyes of God because of my ability to love another human being. I had surrendered my pride to narrow-minded prejudice. By being silent, I was implicitly accepting their rejection. When you accept rejection, either implicitly or explicitly, you reject yourself.

I am who I am. In the end, that's all I really have. So, I'll stop pretending that nobody knows I'm a lesbian and start assuming that they know and accept it. I've tried it a bit already. I took Shannon to a school barbecue (she's still mad that I didn't introduce her as my girlfriend. One thing at a time.) I made sure that the internship director knew I was lesbian and that my teaching parish would know as well. So far, the world hasn't ended and I haven't been kicked out. But, I still will probably not be a pastor in the Lutheran Church. I will deal with that when the time comes. But until that time comes, and long after it's gone, I think I'll just walk with my head up and the closet door firmly shut behind me, thanks just the same.



"... As she grows in years you should place in her hands The Holy Scriptures and teach her the Ten Commandments, The Creed, The Lord's Prayer, and the Interim Guidelines on Sexual Conduct. ..."

My Own Ordination-- Irregular?

By Rev. Jack Schieman

As the time for Jeff Johnson's ordination approaches, I am reminded of my own somewhat irregular, what I like to call "insubordination." Back in 1978, when the AELC didn't exist and Christ Seminary, Seminex grads like myself had no place to rest our heads, a number of us pastored in "creative" situations. Like me, for instance. The LCMS would not ordain me although I was certified by the Seminary. A brave LCMS parish, Trinity Lutheran, Pleasanton, decided to call me, against the wishes of the Synod. Notice, they called me even though I was not as yet ordained. Ah, those were the radical days when liberals were liberals and... well, I digress. Anyway, we petitioned the District President (same as Bishop but too Catholic sounding for LCMS) to do the ordination and he refused, on more than one occasion. Finally, Trinity, Pleasanton, asked the Circuit Counselor (same as Dean) to do the deed with the permission of the circuit churches (same as conference). Twelve churches voted to authorize the Rev. Richard Brewer of Faith Lutheran, Pleasanton, to ordain me without permission of the District President. My ordination of January 12, 1978, was never accepted by the LCMS and I was never allowed to vote at District conventions. It was not until a renegade little Synod called the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches came to be that my ordination was finally accepted, without fanfare or fuss. After all, I had been pastoring Trinity for four years by then. Now I find that my insubordination is even accepted by the ELCA. All of which demonstrates an important point. When the Spirit sustains an ordination, the bureaucracy is sure to follow. Moreover, there is really more than one way to skin a cat. Justice issues can be met with more than one strategy. Jeff Johnson will be ordained. And while the official church may not recognize the deed now, the Spirit will. She will sustain his ordination and the ordinations of others like him, so that Lesbian and Gay people may have the spiritual leadership we need and deserve.

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1990 Pledge Drive

LLGM is conducting a pledge drive to secure operating funds for the 1990 fiscal year. Based on actual figures for 1989, office expenses are expected to run \$1,300 per month after the new year. By action of the Steering Committee, each of the two pastors hired to lead the ministry will be paid an annual salary of \$24,000 (\$2,000 per month). An additional \$700 will be needed each month for health benefits and travel reimbursement. Thus, the Budget Committee has projected that LLGM must raise \$6,000 each month to cover basic staff and administrative costs.

How can you help? Plan to include LLGM in your monthly giving during 1990. The following chart shows what will be needed:

<u># of people</u>	<u>\$/month</u>	<u>total/month</u>
15	\$100	\$1,500
15	\$75	\$1,125
25	\$50	\$1,250
100	\$10	\$1,100
50	\$25	\$1,125
TOTAL		\$6,125

Please consider carefully how much you are able to give. Only 210 people are needed to participate in the pledge drive, and its success will go a long way toward securing the future of Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministry.

Additional monies for programming are also being sought through a variety of private gifts and grants. You can help there too, by supplementing your pledge with an occasional contribution.

In just a few short months the members and supporters of LLGM have set ambitious goals for ministry with the lesbian and gay community and made great strides toward getting these programs underway. Your continued goodwill and generous support will move us even closer toward realizing our vision!

LUTHERAN LESBIAN & GAY MINISTRY 1990 Pledge Card

☐ Yes, I/We would like to make a major gift to the ministry of LLGM.

____ Archangel (gift of \$1,500 or more)

____ Seraph (gift of \$500 or more)

☐ I/We would like to make the following monthly pledge to support the ministry of LLGM.

____ \$150/month

____ \$75/month

____ \$25/month

____ \$100/month

____ \$50/month

____ \$15/month

☐ I/We will make a monthly pledge but prefer to contribute on a quarterly basis.

Name: _____

Address: _____ Phone No: _____

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