



the mission

THE NEWSLETTER OF EXTRAORDINARY LUTHERAN MINISTRIES

Possibility and Invisibility

You are helping create new possibilities amid difficult realities. In August, nearly 1,000 lay and rostered leaders of the ELCA met for the triennial Churchwide Assembly. Throughout the week there were many positive actions taken and LGBTQ people and allies saw the possibility of God moving the church forward in new ways.

At the same time, many LGBTQ people and allies felt invisible during the week. We saw God revealed in new ways as we welcomed, affirmed, and included diverse voices, faces, languages and cultures. We longed for our LGBTQ identities to be part of that richness. Some of us saw familiar LGBTQ faces in leadership roles throughout the week. Yet others had no idea that they were among LGBTQ friends. You can't see we're LGBTQ by looking at us. We need to claim our own identities, and our allies must name us in order for our diversity to be known. We lament the invisibility of LGBTQ people among the other diversity explicitly celebrated in the hall and in worship. It is our sincere hope and prayer that future assemblies will visibly celebrate the gifts of LGBTQ people and worship leaders.

We are experiencing how good the church can be when we break from a narrow understanding of church dominated by only a few cultures. We align with others who feel invisible and filled with possibility – and we are filled with resolve to help our church continue to move forward.

We are all connected in this journey – especially those of us seeking to lead from the margins. What joy awaits as we continue to break open the racism, patriarchy, heterosexism, homophobia and transphobia, ableism, classism and sexism which continue to confine us. As we do the hard work, we more clearly see the possibility of becoming a church transformed by God through the named and celebrated gifts of all people.



These buttons were handed out at Churchwide with this question: What is your hope for LGBTQ people and the church?

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PURPOSE

ELM believes LGBTQ leaders have extraordinary gifts for ministry. Through their public witness, these leaders enrich and transform our church and proclaim the Gospel now.

Widening the "Imagination Gap"

There's been conversation lately in many mainline North American denominations, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, about what some call a "clergy gap." The conversation is in response to an increasing number of people leaving the ministry through retirement, death, and other reasons and a decreasing number of people entering the ministry. You are helping write another story about ministry leaders - one of abundance.

Currently, about 1 in 10 of every Lutheran seminarians publicly identifies as LGBTQ and part of the Proclaim community. The good news is that recent graduates seem to be moving more quickly into calls. Yet some still wait - some for far too long. There are 14 Proclaim members actively seeking a call. This number has stayed fairly stable for the past years. The ELCA currently doesn't keep statistics about how many people overall are seeking calls - or how many calls are open. We know many LGBTQ people wait longer for calls. And we know too many stories about congregations who have refused talented candidates simply because they are LGBTQ.

This isn't just about diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. The ELCA report also shows that since 2012, ELCA seminary enrollment of persons of color and those whose language is other than English is about 7%. These candidates and pastors face similar challenges (and even more so for those who are LGBTQ persons of color).

We have an "imagination gap." Thanks to you, we have been urging ELCA bishops, synod staff, candidacy committees, and congregations to open their imaginations to consider who God might be calling to serve as ministry leaders. LGBTQ people aren't going to seminary only because the rules now allow it. We are going because our experiences as LGBTQ people lead us to want to serve God and the church. We are going because we want to proclaim the Gospel now in a world that needs it. Some see a church in decline. You help others see a church in hopeful transformation!



You support Proclaim seminarians who help widen the "imagination" gap through their visible witness.

ELM by the Numbers

Current Proclaim Members - **239**

Serving in the ELCA - **133**

Serving in the ELCIC (Canada) - **3**

ELCA Congregations served by

Proclaim rostered leader - **113**

ELCA Synods with a Proclaim Member - **54**
(out of 65)

ELCA Seminarians - **68**

ELCIC Seminarians - **1**

ELCA Awaiting First Call - **6**

ELCA Awaiting Call - **8**

Proclaim Gathering & Instigators Retreat 2016

At the Proclaim Gathering this year, we talked about how we “kindle the flame” for each other. Proclaim member John Brett wrote:

“Never underestimate the power of a Proclaim Gathering worship to transform our perspective on the possible, our liberation, to kindle joy & deep gladness.”

Others used these words and phrases to describe our time together: Spirit-filled, deepened connections and support, engaging storytelling and story listening, hilarity and laughter, dynamic worship, and connecting with our roots.

Just prior to the Proclaim Gathering, we held a retreat for the “Instigators” – people who were part of the catalyst for this movement for LGBTQ leaders in the Lutheran church. These seven leaders met to share stories and sort through materials we are preparing to donate to the Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies at the Pacific School of Religion later this year. They joined the Proclaim community for several meals and worship and then told their own stories and reflections in the opening plenary.

Many who attended the Gathering were inspired to go out and proclaim their story. Following the Gathering, Proclaim members said that in worship the Sunday following the Gathering, they felt compelled to witness about being an LGBTQ person in ministry. Others had conversations with airplane seatmates and family members.

Thank you to all who joined together to contribute over \$8,000 this year to provide scholarships for many attendees. In addition, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation and Portico Benefit Services provided funding for additional program costs. Your support to ELM helps make renewing and sustaining gatherings like this possible.



Seven of those who helped launch the movement to affirm openly LGBTQ rostered leaders joined the Gathering. Left to right: Margaret Moreland, Jim DeLange, Mari Irvin, Jeff R. Johnson, Greg Egertson, Phyllis Zillhart, Ruth Frost.



People are Talking...

“We counsel students regularly who are LGBTQ and have been hurt by the church or their family, some of whom have even self-harmed or attempted suicide because of these conflicts between who they are and what they have been told and experienced in faith communities. To be able to share with them ELM resources, particularly Treasure in Clay Jars, helps them see that there are faithful people out there like them, and communities beyond our college that would not only welcome them but empower them to be leaders. I have experienced firsthand that ELM resources help save lives, because they help people with their understanding of God, the nature of the Christian faith and community, and themselves.”

—Rev. Katherine E. Fick, Associate College Pastor at St. Olaf College

“Joining Proclaim was like finding water in the desert.”

—Kathleen Kerin, Proclaim seminarian

“It was inspiring and helpful to hear that my story and all other LGBTQ+ stories are sacred and have a place in the church. I will now honor my story more often rather than trying to hide my story. This gathering will help me be a better equipped pastor in the realm of listening and valuing others stories as well as valuing my own.”

—Laura, Proclaim Gathering Attendee

How to Give

Thank you for ALL you do for ELM. Your gifts fund all of the programs and projects you're reading about in the MISSION newsletter.

Thank you to the 310 of you who have given \$163,536 already this year!

Your gift of \$100 or \$45 or whatever you can give will help reach the goal and fund our mission. To fully fund our ministry this year, we need to raise \$56,464 by December 31 from at least 190 people. We can do this with your help! To join others supporting ELM, make a secure online gift at www.elm.org today or send a check or credit card gift in the enclosed envelope. Join the Friends! Monthly gifts and annual gifts of \$300 or more will be recognized in our annual report.

If you agree LGBTQ people have extraordinary gifts for ministry, join us in affirming their work to enrich and transform our church and communities.

Come out about ELM!

Come out in support of LGBTQ people in ministry! You can share your support through this colorful poster that tells others about the mission of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries.

Hang this poster in your church to help others learn more about our ministry. You also show visitors what your congregation cares about. And, most importantly, you may encourage LGBTQ people in your congregation who are considering a call to ministry.

If your congregation wants to come out in support of LGBTQ leaders and the ministry of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries by hanging this new poster, please contact us at communications@elm.org to request a poster be mailed to you.



ELM friend Deb Derylak shows off the poster at Grace Lutheran in Evanston, IL. Email us at communications@elm.org if you want one!

ELM Staff

In August, we were thrilled to welcome the Rev. Asher O'Callaghan as program director (full-time) and promote Christophor Gilbert to Communications & Development Coordinator (part-time).



We are thankful for YOU! ELM staff left to right: Amalia Vagts, Asher O'Callaghan, Christophor Gilbert

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