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ELM BELIEF STATEMENT

ELM believes the public witness of gender and sexual minority ministers transforms the church and enriches the world.

Strategic Directions:

1. Public Witness - Model God's liberation for all by publicly claiming the value of visible LBGTQIA+ led ministry
2. Boldly Proclaim - Boldly address barriers and create openings for emerging ideas, leaders, and movements within the church and our communities.

Explicit Practice:

- We respond boldly to God's love and call to justice in these ways:
- We listen deeply.
 - We publicly claim our identities.
 - We work collaboratively.
 - We act transparently.
 - We ask, "Who is not here?"
 - We speak truthfully, even when it's hard.
 - We laugh together.

Newly Published Proclaimers + Joel Workin

One Coin Found: How God's Love Stretches to the Margins by Emmy Kegler
Emmy Kegler has a complicated relationship with the Bible. As a queer woman who grew up in both conservative Evangelical and progressive Protestant churches, she knows too well how Scripture can be used to wound and exclude. And yet, the stories of Scripture continue to captivate and inspire her—both as a person of faith and as a pastor to a congregation. So she set out to fall in love with the Bible, wrestling with the stories inside, where she met a God who continues to seek us out—appearing again and again as a voice, a presence, and a promise.

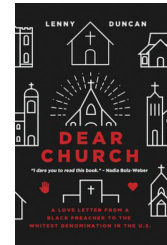


Whenever we are pushed to the edges, our voices silenced, or our stories dismissed, God goes out after us—seeking us until we are found again. And God is seeking out those whose voices we too quickly silence and dismiss, too. Because God's story is a story of welcome and acceptance for everyone—no exceptions.

Kegler shows us that even when we feel like lost and dusty coins—rusted from others' indifference, misspent and misused—God picks up a broom and sweeps every corner of creation to find us.

Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US by Lenny Duncan

Lenny Duncan is the unlikely of pastors. Formerly incarcerated, he is now a black preacher in the whitest denomination in the United States: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Shifting demographics and shrinking congregations make all the headlines, but Duncan sees something else at work—drawing a direct line between the church's lack of diversity and the church's lack of vitality. The problems the ELCA faces are theological, not sociological. But so are the answers.



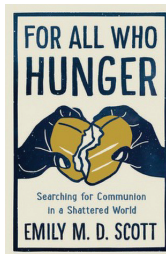
Part manifesto, part confession, and all love letter, Dear Church offers a bold new vision for the future of Duncan's denomination and the broader mainline Christian community of faith. Dear Church rejects the narrative of church decline and calls everyone—leaders and laity alike—to the front lines of the church's renewal through racial equality and justice.

It is time for the church to rise up, dust itself off, and take on forces of this world that act against God: whiteness, misogyny, nationalism, homophobia, and economic injustice. Duncan gives a blueprint for the way forward and urges us to follow in the revolutionary path of Jesus.

Dear Church also features a discussion guide at the back—perfect for church groups, book clubs, and other group discussion.

For All Who Hunger: Searching for Communion in a Shattered World by Emily M.D. Scott

Emily Scott never planned on becoming a pastor. But when she started a church for misfits that met over dinner in Brooklyn, she discovered an unlikely calling—and an antidote to the loneliness that affects us all.



As founding pastor of St. Lydia's Brooklyn, where worship takes place over a meal, Emily Scott spent eight years ministering to a scrappy collective of people with different backgrounds, incomes, and levels of social skills. Each week, they broke bread, sang hymns, made awkward conversation with strangers, and then did the dishes. But in a city where everyone lives on top of each other, yet everyone is lonely, these gatherings filled a longing that most people—even Emily—didn't realize they felt.


Scott weaves stories and reflections from the life of her unlikely congregation in prose both beautiful and incisive. She explores how small acts of connection hold more power than we realize in a time when our differences are being weaponized. Recalling her journey as a single woman and a pastor looking for love and friendship in a city of millions, For All Who Hunger articulates the value of church as a place where people can hear not only that they are loved, but that they are good. When Emily's congregation builds relationships with their neighbors in one of the world's most unequal cities, they find courage and resources to begin, together, making wrongs right.

For All Who Hunger is a story about faith that invites us to live with eyes wide open. There's a place for you at the table.

Dear God, I am Gay- Thank you! By Joel Workin

Joel's writings have been a resource to numerous LBGTQIA+ rostered leaders and others. He embodied ELM's core belief that the church is changed by leaders who are public about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Proceeds benefit ELM's mission. Visit elm.org to order your copy today!



 All the books listed here (except for Joel Workin's book) are available for purchase on Amazon. If you use Amazon to purchase items, first type in smile.amazon.com, select ELM as your charity of choice, and ELM will receive a .5% donation of the purchase from the Amazon Foundation! Thank you for all the ways you support LBGTQIA+ ministry leadership.



EXTRAORDINARY
LUTHERAN
MINISTRIES

the mission

THE NEWSLETTER OF EXTRAORDINARY LUTHERAN MINISTRIES

A Message from your Executive Director

Thirty years ago a movement was afoot: two communities were about to take a leap of faith that would end up meaning trials and expulsions from the newly formed Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Ordinations were being planned that held no official standing with the denomination, but whose extra ordinem* nature would embed those ordained and those in attendance that day into a pursuit for justice and inclusion for LBGTQIA+ folks in a profound way.

30 Extraordinary Years.

For thirty extraordinary years, we have lived in the brightness cast by the fire lit that Saturday in 1990 when the Spirit descended on the heads of the ordinands through the hands of their peers to ordain the ministries of this gay man and lesbian couple as good, holy, and beloved in God's sight.

The instigators of Ruth, Jeff, and Phyllis' ordination thirty years ago couldn't have exactly predicted the impact their actions would have on our church or how their decision to be bold in faith would influence a wider welcome within the denomination. They couldn't have known that, because of their profound witness, in 2019 there would be more than 350 publicly-out LBGTQIA+ individuals in seminary and serving in congregations as pastors and deacons in the ELCA.

Over the next few months, we will re-look at these 30 Extraordinary Years: the people, the stories, the congregations, the communities that helped to give life to Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries and to the LBGTQIA+ leaders who serve our church. Thank you for journeying with us through these 30 Extraordinary Years!

*extra ordinem - a latin term meaning "out of order" used by Bishop Krister Stendahl to describe the nature of the first Extraordinary Ordinations that he argued must occur "extraordinarily" (i.e. outside the confines of the ELCA) if the ELCA will not ordain these individuals.

Yours in Christ,


Rev. Amanda Gerken-Nelson



ANNOUNCING THE 2019 JOEL WORKIN SCHOLAR, join us in congratulating Cassie Hartnett!

Here is an excerpt from the letter to Cassie from the Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries Joel Workin Committee:

During this year that celebrates Stonewall 50, we were impressed by your reference to the times in which Joel lived and wrote. It was certainly noteworthy that you, as a young seminarian, strove to identify with him and related his life experience to the present day. Joel wrote that "the light unfailingly shows us where we must die" and your response to that was most moving:

"Joel Workin would have known something about death, even when he spoke these words in his mid-20s. The AIDS epidemic had begun, and suddenly young, previously healthy gay men were watching their friends sicken and die instead of fall in love and make mistakes and raise families and learn new things and create beautiful art. For him to say that God's light shows us where we must die was not a throwaway line...For gay men like Joel, and for queer people even now who watch as trans women of color are killed in the streets, as young gay men and their friends are shot during a night out dancing, or as queer youth are bullied into self-harm when school is supposed to be safe, death does not feel so far away."

Cassie Hartnett (she/her) grew up on the Connecticut shoreline and graduated from Union Theological Seminary in May 2019, where she studied psychology and religion, and wrote a new play for her thesis project. Previously, she studied at Barnard College and spent two years in the Twin Cities serving with the Lutheran Volunteer Corps, including work with ReconcilingWorks. Cassie began her internship year at St. John's Lutheran Church in Parkville, MD this August. In her spare time, she practices ballet and yoga, bakes excellent cookies, and can recommend a great queer young adult novel.



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**Thank you to our
Board Members for
their service and
commitment to ELM!**

Love Lives On

When the people of Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts concluded their ministry as a congregation earlier this year, they made a sizable donation to Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries' Endowment – a gift that paid tribute to their past as a leader in the movement for full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people in the Lutheran church.

Founded in 1954, Mt. Olivet began as a house church, meeting in a Victorian home in this Worcester suburb, about 45 minutes west of Boston. By the mid-70s they'd outgrown the house and, under the leadership of Pastor Clifford Gerber, the house was torn down and a new church building was constructed to accommodate the congregation's worship and ministry. Less than a decade later, Mt. Olivet became the first Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation in New England.

The story behind Mt. Olivet's commitment to full inclusion is, at its roots, a story of friendship.

In the 1980s the church organist, Randy Rice, came out to the congregation. He'd grown up Roman Catholic and closeted, but at Mt. Olivet he found a place where he could be fully and unapologetically himself. He and Pastor Gerber shared a strong friendship and, as someone who'd started out as a seminarian then pastor in Philadelphia in the 1960s, Pastor Gerber approached this issue as another chapter in the ongoing struggle for inclusion, equality, and basic human rights. Pastor Gerber's daughter, Stephanie Ruggiere, remembers the day that Randy stood before the congregation and shared his coming out story. That moment was formative for her and for the entire community. **She describes it as "a moment that drew us together, knowing that whoever you are, this is where you can come. We can know you for who you are, and we will accept you."**

After their experience of becoming an RIC congregation, Pastor Gerber went on to serve on the synod's task force for gay and lesbian concerns until he retired. He would visit congregations throughout the region, both Lutheran and not, walking with them as they considered how to become more open and affirming toward sexual and gender minorities.

Over time the religious identity of the neighborhood changed, and Mt. Olivet experienced the kind of decline that is increasingly common across the church. As the congregation wrestled with decisions about how to be faithful stewards, they came to the difficult decision to end the congregation's ministry of sixty-five years. "We could have gone on longer," Stephanie shared, "But we knew that by making the hard decision now, there would be assets to share with groups like Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries. We wanted to be able to let our closing be a gift to the neighborhood and the wider church. It was healing for us to be able to do that." The church building was sold to a school that had its beginnings at Mt. Olivet years ago, so the site will continue to serve the community.

We give thanks for the witness of Mt. Olivet's extraordinary gift to ELM's Endowment and for those who have called Mt. Olivet their home. **Mt. Olivet's gift will make it possible for us to continue supporting people of all sexual orientations and gender identities preparing for ministry throughout the church - working to make God's house a place where all are welcome.**

The Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries Endowment is a new, permanent fund, established to receive bequests and other estate gifts from friends of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries. The endowment fund wholeheartedly supports the mission of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries in its efforts to sustain publicly-identified, Lutheran, gender and sexual minority rostered ministers, those pursuing rostered ministry, and their congregations and ministries.

If you or your congregation would like to learn more about the Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries Endowment, please contact Amanda at amanda@elm.org.



Proclaim Gathering Highlights & Picture Gallery

At the Proclaim Gathering 2019: The Church (Un)bound, 80 Proclaimers, and their partners/spouses, came together in Milwaukee to reconnect, retreat, and revive themselves again. The three days were spent experimenting with what a church (un)bound could be if the LGBTQIA+ leaders in the church were the catalysts of change.

We raised our consciousness by participating in an anti-racism training; where an intersectional framework of oppression that enveloped gender and sexual minority identities also highlighted the ways that we, too, become tools of white supremacy. The keynote speaker, Rev. Alex Da Silva Souto, offered a vision of social justice organizing within the church that makes clear demands and prioritizes justice for all, exemplified through the work they are doing in the United Methodist Church. There is much to learn from queer siblings across denominations and difference. The alliances in solidarity and love continue to grow. Worshipping in unity with the African Descent Lutheran Association (a first!), attending peer-led skill shares/workshops, and spending time laughing together made this Gathering truly one-of-a-kind. We are already looking forward to what years to come will bring!



Olivia LaFlamme, Program Director
Photo Credit: Emily Ann Garcia Photography



ELM Staff

Hi! We're your staff at Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries and we are all honored to continue the mission.



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