



## Lutheran CORE - Coalition for Reform

*"Working Together for Positive Reform in the ELCA"*

visit our website at: [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org)

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### Lutheran CORE Newsletter 1.3

**August 15, 2007 - Churchwide Assembly Wrap-Up**

The Churchwide Assembly in Chicago, from our viewpoint, wasn't as good as it should have been or as bad as it could have been. It should, however, be a wake-up call for all of us who desire to see a revitalized Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that stands firmly for the authority of Holy Scripture, the revealed name of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the God-given blessing of marriage between one man and one woman for life.

Chair of Lutheran CORE Paull Spring said it best in the press release issued after the assembly, regarding the action to refrain from disciplining pastors in same-sex relationships: "It's deceptive and lacks integrity." Gary Diers, a CORE contact and voting member, expressed to the assembly that his farm (he is a dairy farmer in Minnesota) had a fence around his yard when his children were young, in order to protect them from harm from the large animals and equipment. When God builds a fence, Diers said, we need to believe that it is for our protection.

Ryan Schwarz of the steering committee noted that 467 voting members opposed the "let's be nice and stop discipline" substitution. Goodsoil picked up only 2 votes on the amended resolution, but the orthodox total dropped 36, perhaps because they had left the hall or simply abstained. This is a much larger "core" of support than we thought we had going into the assembly. About 69 additional voting members is all we need at Minneapolis in 2009 to have a majority. That is a bit more than one per synod. Schwarz added, "We were barely formed and almost totally inactive when the voting members for this CWA were elected. Truly we were fighting with one arm tied behind our back. Yet 467 voting members stood with us."

We solicit your prayers and, if at all possible, your presence with us at Lindenhurst, Illinois on September 28, as we move forward toward 2009 and beyond. James Nestingen, Robert Benne, and Paull Spring will reflect on our situation and training will be offered to synodical contacts to help build a base of support across the church. More information on this and many other matters are on our website at [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org)

### Lutheran CORE's Presence

Lutheran CORE was very visible at the Churchwide Assembly, and received broad coverage in the media. Fox local news in Chicago included Schwarz and Mark Chavez in their television news broadcast on Aug. 11; Schwarz was quoted in a local Chicago ABC news web story; we were mentioned in a Fox News report afterwards on their website and in other reports. We had a headquarters room at the Hyatt and used another room for larger meetings. CORE signs were posted at strategic locations. (Goodsoil also had its own signs and its own headquarters.) Remember, the Chicago assembly was held at two separate sites. The assembly sessions themselves and the worship services were at the Navy Pier. Most of the hearings and other meetings were at the Hyatt Regency, a mile or so away. This meant that some 1,500 persons needed to be moved from one site to the other each morning and evening.

We were working for you and for the good of the church of Christ. Of course, all of this is not free and your contributions are always much appreciated. Please send them to Lutheran CORE, c/o WordAlone Network, 2299 Palmer Dr., Suite 220, New Brighton, MN 55112. Please make checks payable to WordAlone Network, and write "Lutheran CORE" on the memo line.

## **No Rules Fights**

Those who remember Orlando recall the endless debates about rules on the opening night. At Chicago, there were no rules fights on opening night. What was learned from Orlando is that, under ELCA rules, any attempt to impose a 2/3 requirement on any vote requires a 2/3 vote for the imposition, making it hard to accomplish. Therefore, the only votes that require a 2/3 vote are votes to change the constitution or bylaws or to enter full Communion relationships or to approve social statements. The Goodsoil group had a very clever strategy to avoid the need for a 2/3 vote, which was to attempt to ask the Church Council to revise the two documents that set ordination standards.

In spite of that, most sexuality matters were referred to the Task Force on Human Sexuality, and the assembly added instructions to the task force to advise the 2009 churchwide assembly specifically regarding whether ordained pastors should be permitted to have same-sex relationships. Then, on Saturday morning—the last day—in a jarring inconsistency, the assembly voted to ask bishops to exercise restraint by not disciplining pastors in same-sex relationships nor to discipline congregations and persons who call into ministry otherwise-qualified candidates to serve if they are in such relationships.

Interestingly, the language asks for restraint on any discipline for whatever reason. But voting members were persuaded by an emotional appeal by retiring Bishop Paul Landahl of the Metro Chicago Synod to "give us something to take back to our synods" which had asked for present standards to be overturned. It is likely that many voting members were snookered by this manipulative appeal to vote for something quite opposite from what they had decided earlier.

## **No First Ballot Victory for Presiding Bishop**

An ecclesiastical ballot was taken on opening night for the position of presiding bishop. Bishop Hanson was eligible for re-election. The results were released on the second day, indicating that Bishop Hanson fell two votes short of a first-ballot victory, with Prof. Karl Donfried in second place. Bishop Hanson then quickly won victory on the second ballot.

A layperson, David Swartling, was elected secretary. While he might disagree with us on various issues in the life of the ELCA, our sense is that he will be fair as he carries out that office. Certainly we can honor the financial sacrifice he accepts by leaving his practice of law for a churchwide position.

## **Goodsoil Service**

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender lobby, Goodsoil, sponsored a worship service Wednesday night with Bishop Margaret Payne of the New England Synod presiding and Bradley Schmeling preaching. Payne chaired the original Task Force on Sexuality and Schmeling was removed from the ELCA clergy roster this July after notifying his bishop in August 2006 that he was in a sexual relationship with another man. The removal process included discipline hearings and appeals to the ELCA Appeals Committee.

Several members of the Lutheran Core Steering Committee attended the liturgy, held next door to our hospitality room. These terms from the worship bulletin may give the flavor of what transpired.

The word "Father" was suppressed except for one occurrence when it was paired with "and Mother" in the prayer that replaced the Lord's Prayer (see below). The term "Lord" was only used in the final Communion hymn.

An affirmation of faith credited to Bread for the World declared God to be "maker of an unfinished world, who calls us to participate in bringing about the fullness of Creation" [capitalization theirs]. Jesus was not in any way identified with God nor confessed as risen. The third article proclaimed that "God, through people, can bring peace and hope, justice and equality, the relief of suffering and pain, and the final triumph of love and grace." Evidently the Almighty (another term not used) has been considerably demoted to a being who needs a lot of help from us.

The prayer introduced "As Christ teaches us" (are there some pages missing in our Bibles?) is directed to "Eternal Spirit, Earth-Maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all." The source of this prayer is cited as an Anglican worship resource from New Zealand.

Stanzas were omitted and alterations were made to Evangelical Lutheran Worship hymns so as to avoid offending any of the agendas represented in the service. A number of bishops and other church leaders were observed to be present (but not Bishop Hanson).

### **Pass It On**

We urge you to copy and distribute this newsletter electronically and on paper to people who share our concerns. Continue to pray for our work and for the ELCA.

If you have questions, please check our website [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org) or contact us. A press release issued by Lutheran CORE and picked up by many media outlets is also on that website (use the "news and discussion" link).

Thank you for your prayers and support. We cannot take credit for those successes that occurred. Surely God was at work in answer to our prayers. We have made new friends and contacts who will help advance this work of reform. To God be the glory!

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