

Lutheran CORE News 2.1

February 12, 2008

(Please copy and distribute as widely as possible.)

New web site!

Lutheran Core has a new web site - www.lutherancore.org

Thanks to Jerry Youngquist in North Branch, Minn., for designing and building the new site.

Your feedback and suggestions for improving the site are most welcome. Send your comments to info@lutherancore.org

We would like more information added to our blog - www.commonconfession.blogspot.com, which is linked to the "News" menu on our web site. Please read the blog, comment on anything there, and pass it on to others.

There is also a Lutheran CORE group on Facebook – www.facebook.com! We urge you to join the 29 members now in the group. It is a great way to interact with some of the younger folks who also are dedicated to reform within the ELCA.

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New Advisory Council

We welcome a group of outstanding leaders in the ELCA who have agreed to serve on our Advisory Council. Surely you will recognize some of the names on this list:

- **Mr. Alan Beaver**, Salisbury, North Carolina, member of Lasting Word, North Carolina Synod
- **Rev. John Beem**, Miltona, Minnesota, former Bishop of East Central Wisconsin Synod
- **Dr. Robert Benne**, Professor Emeritus Roanoke College, Virginia, and Director of the Center for Religion and Society
- **Dr. Carl Braaten**, Sun City West, Arizona, Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology and Senior Editor of *Pro Ecclesia*
- **Rev. James R. Crumley, Jr.**, Chapin, South Carolina, former Bishop of the Lutheran Church in America
- **Rev. Paul Gausmann**, Pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, York, Pennsylvania and member of Lutherans Reform! in the Lower Susquehanna Synod
- **Rev. Jeffray Greene**, Pastor of American Lutheran Church, Rantoul, Illinois and Editor of *FOCL Point*, Fellowship of Confessional Lutherans
- **Rev. Gary Hatcher**, Pastor of St. Peter Lutheran Church, Greene, Iowa and member of call to Faithfulness in the NE Iowa Synod
- **Rev. George Mocko**, Towson, Maryland, former Bishop of Delaware-Maryland Synod
- **Rev. Dennis Nelson**, Pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, West Covina, California and member of the Evangelical Mission Network
- **Dr. James Nestingen**, St. Paul, Minnesota, Professor Emeritus, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota

- **Rev. Richard Niebanck**, Delhi, New York, Former Secretary for Social Concerns, Department of Church in Society, Division for Mission in North America in the Lutheran Church in America
- **Rev. Russell Saltzman**, Pastor of Ruskin Heights Lutheran Church, Kansas City, Missouri, and former editor of *Forum Letter*
- **Rev. Kenneth Sauer**, Columbus, Ohio, former Bishop of Southern Ohio Synod and Chair of ELCA Conference of Bishops
- **Rev. Beth Schlegel**, Pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, York, Pennsylvania
- **Rev. Fred Schumacher**, Manchester, New Jersey, Executive Director of the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau
- **Rev. Morris Vaagenes**, Shoreview, Minnesota, Pastor Emeritus of North Heights Lutheran Church, Roseville, Minnesota

We will gather this group for an initial meeting in late April and invite them to consider how they can support the work of Lutheran CORE. This group is particularly qualified to comment upon the draft social statement on human sexuality and the Bible study materials being released for congregations. We are hoping that they can add ideas from their own areas of expertise.

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Steering Committee

The Steering Committee has met twice since our last newsletter, once by conference call and once at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church near Columbus, Ohio.

We clarified some administrative issues and reaffirmed our financial commitment to reimburse the WordAlone Network for their services to us. Lutheran CORE steering committee members also will attend meetings of the ELCA church council.

In October 2002 the ELCA outreach office in Chicago acknowledged a relationship with an independent Lutheran organization, Lutherans Concerned/North America (a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered group). Lutheran CORE is seeking similar recognition by a churchwide office. The appropriate paperwork has been submitted and we have sought advice from appropriate ELCA officials on how to apply for this status. It will not constitute endorsement by the ELCA, nor will it establish any control by the ELCA over how we operate. It may allow for donations to be made to Lutheran CORE using the Simply Giving program.

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Annual Gathering

The annual gathering of Lutheran CORE will again be held in conjunction with the WordAlone Network annual convention. We will meet during the first workshop time on Monday afternoon, April 14, at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minn. The Steering Committee will meet Monday evening and Tuesday morning after the event. Our friends and supporters are always welcome at steering committee meetings.

You must pre-register with WordAlone to reserve a lunch on April 14. For registration

information for the WordAlone convention, please watch their website – www.wordalone.org

The annual gathering of LC3 will be held during the second afternoon workshop session at Calvary on April 14.

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Unauthorized ordinations

We are concerned that some ELCA bishops are doing nothing about unauthorized ordinations of persons not in compliance with the ELCA's standards. In particular, there appears to be no discipline for congregations who ordain and call these persons. As we receive information, we hope to publicize it in this newsletter. Please email specific, verifiable information to Pastor Steve Shipman at prsteveshipman@gmail.com

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News from the field

In spite of icy road conditions that kept several Lutheran CORE representatives and a number of people from greater upstate New York from attending, about 80 persons met in Buffalo, New York, on Saturday, Feb. 2 for the WordAlone Regional Mission event. Surely the groundhog saw his shadow if he dared to come out of his home. Paull Spring sent a manuscript he had planned to present in person and there was much discussion afterwards.

Lutherans Reform! in the Lower Susquehanna Synod in Penn. met in January. with seventeen people in attendance. Updates were made to the suggested list for nominations for various synod and churchwide offices. The group's new web site is www.lr-elcf.org A synod wide event is planned on Mar. 31 at Messiah Lutheran Church in Lebanon, Penn., which will introduce congregations to the reform group's work. Contact Pr. Paul Gausmann at Pastor.Paul@comcast.net for more information.

The Indiana-Kentucky Renewal Network met on Feb. 9 with more than fifty people in attendance at which Paull Spring was the "keynote speaker." The group has organized with a steering committee, treasury, and a brochure. The group has also asked to be a member group of Lutheran CORE, bringing the total to nine member groups.

Please email the editor with reports of local gatherings. We wish to encourage people around the country with news of the many good things that are happening in the work of reform.

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Thanks for your donations

We are overwhelmed by the generosity of many people. The steering committee was pleased to hear a report that a large congregation in California joined our growing base of congregational supporters and voted to make a generous contribution. Please learn the process for including Lutheran CORE in your congregation's budget and help us expand our mission of working for reform in the ELCA. We also welcome and need individual gifts in any amount, which have

sustained us thus far.

It will not be inexpensive to gather the Advisory Council, and already we are looking at major expenses for our presence at the Minneapolis churchwide assembly in 2009. Our steering committee donates their time, but most need travel reimbursement for meetings and other events including ELCA church council meetings.

Our relationship with the WordAlone Network allows us to avoid many distractions from our mission of reform. While we still hope to secure our own 501(c)(3) non-profit status in the future, for now we operate administratively within WordAlone. Please send your contributions to:

Lutheran CORE
c/o WordAlone Network
2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112

Make checks payable to WordAlone Network, and write "Lutheran CORE" on the memo line. Contributions to Lutheran CORE are tax deductible as permitted by law.

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Pastoral letter

In closing we share a portion of a letter Pr. Tom Renquist wrote to the members of Lord of the Hills Church in Centennial, Col., where he serves. He indicated that 25 years ago he supported the ordination of practicing homosexuals. He continued:

In that congregation we began the discussion by inviting in homosexual Christians who told us, "This is the way God made me, so it must be good." **And precisely there is the misstep: beginning with our human experience.** Building our theology on the human experience is a foundation of sand. Eighty years ago, when the Swiss theologian Karl Barth first began his *Church Dogmatics*, he made just such a false start. Thank goodness, he recognized his mistake after his first volume and started all over again:

...in this second draft I have excluded to the very best of my ability anything that might appear to find for theology a foundation, support, or justification in philosophical existentialism. The Word or existence?

Since we all do know homosexual persons – and like them and love them! – it is so tempting to begin with the human experience: here is X, who so obviously has gifts for the ordained ministry in the parish; whether he has a homosexual partner or not, should we not ordain him and make use of his gifts? Once again it is the argument: "This is the way God made me; therefore it must be good."

But that is an approach that stays stuck in Genesis 1 and 2 (the Stories of Creation) and totally forgets Genesis 3 (the Story of the Fall into Sin). None of us

are as God intended us to be; sin has tainted us all. In fact, that was the sin of Adam and Eve – and therefore the sin of us all – the desire to exalt ourselves and be like God. To this audacious presumption of humans to become God, God answers with the gracious good news of the Gospel: God became human!

His entire letter is posted on our web site at www.lutherancore.org/papers/pastoral-letter.shtml

With such thoughtful, compassionate, and dedicated supporters, there is hope for the ELCA. Keep our bishops, pastors, congregations, and leaders in your prayers. There are no limits on what the Holy Spirit can accomplish. As we observe Lent, recall that the whole Christian movement began with one lonely man dying on a hill outside Jerusalem. We who believe that the power of God raised Jesus can scarcely begin to imagine what this God can do with the ELCA.

Pastor W. Stevens Shipman, steering committee member and communications committee
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