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NETWORK NEWS



Volume 9, Issue 2

MARCH - APRIL 2008

Draft sexuality statement available at ELCA website

by Betsy Carlson, editor

A long-awaited social statement on human sexuality from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is available at www.elca.org/faithfuljourney.

It was mailed to pastors and professional lay ministers at the same time.

WordAlone President Jaynan Clark Eglund said recently: "I urge all WordAlone Network members and friends to read and respond to this proposed social statement on human sexuality. Your comments on this document may be extremely helpful in setting the direction of this denomination on the vitally crucial questions surrounding ordination of practicing homosexuals and the blessings of same-sex relationships."

The draft statement is the product of three studies by an ELCA task force and was initiated due to a request from the 2001 Churchwide Assembly. The task force sought reviews and responses from members and professional and elected leaders of the denomination. In 2005, the task force released its report and recommendations favoring acceptance of lay ministers or ordination of pastors in a homosexual relationship and on blessing such relationships.

The churchwide council supported them and presented them with some alterations to the 2005 churchwide assembly where blessing of a homosexual relationship was left as an

ambiguous possibility but certification or ordination of ministers, even after a proposed special permission process, was rejected. These issues came up at the 2007 churchwide assembly and were referred to the task force for more study and new recommendations.

However, in a letter to rostered leaders before the release of the draft document on sexuality, Rev. Rebecca Larson wrote: "Please keep in mind these points about the draft social statement and possible responses to it:

1. This document is a draft, and is subject to change.
2. This draft statement will not contain recommendations requested by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly. The task force will bring recommendations on rostering lay ordained ministers to the February 2009 Church Council meeting."

Larson added that the task force seeks responses from the ELCA. Means of response include a comment form attached to the draft statement and summary reports from organized hearings. She added that as of the day she wrote, some 52 synods had scheduled at least one hearing.

Eglund said she urges everyone to check now with their synod offices for times and dates of any hearings. ♦

Network convention is April 13-14 at Calvary Lutheran in Minnesota

Participants at the WordAlone Network's annual convention April 13-14 at Calvary Lutheran Church, Golden Valley, Minn., can learn how to defend their faith as well as catch up on the latest news of renewal movements.

Check-in at the convention will begin at 2 p.m. Sunday and there will be workshops starting at 3:30 p.m., which is a change from earlier conventions that started on Sunday evening. Another change is that the convention will conclude at 5:30 p.m. on Monday so that working people will miss just one day of work. Registration information was included in the past newsletter and is online at www.wordalone.org.

Sunday evening's keynote speaker is James Kallas, a retired Dana College, Blair, Neb., president, former missionary to Cameroun, West Africa, and former professor at California Lutheran College, Thousand Oaks, Calif. He has written several books including "The Real Satan, From Biblical Times to the Present," and "Layman's Introduction to Christian Thought."

Pastor Gary Jepsen, Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Puyallup, Wash., will speak on "Equipping the Saints for Ministry" during his Monday morning keynote address. He has been a pastor at several churches in the Seattle-Tacoma area for most of his 31-year ministry. While doing work in biblical studies under the late Gerhard Forde, he wrote a paper on "primacy of the Word" in theologies of Martin Luther and Karl Barth.

Lutheran CORE and LC3 will hold their annual meetings during the WordAlone gathering on Monday afternoon. ♦

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Interest in Lutheran CORE grows

by Mark Chavez, director

The churchwide assembly last summer accomplished one thing for WordAlone and our partners in Lutheran CORE, the coalition for reform – it moved many people who had not been involved in reform groups to step up and volunteer to help.

The assembly's decision to affirm the ELCA's present ordination standards, but then ask that the standards not be upheld was an eye opener: the lack of integrity concerning what the ELCA says it believes and what it does was in plain view.

The result is that in some synods where there was not much organized reform activity, there have been a series of meetings and the formation of new groups that are working with Lutheran CORE since last fall.

A new reform group in the Indiana-Kentucky synod has formed – Indiana-Kentucky Renewal Network. See www.ikrn.org. More than 50 people attended their last meeting on Feb. 9, at which Pr. Paull Spring, Lutheran CORE chair, was the guest speaker. Spring was also the guest speaker at the first large public meeting in the Rocky Mountain Synod on Feb. 24 in the Denver, Colo., area that was attended by 70-80 people.

Paull Spring and Marc Kolden, professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., will speak at a gathering of Lutheran CORE supporters in the Southeast Michigan Synod in the Detroit area (St. Michael Lutheran Church in Canton) on April 13. Zion Lutheran Church in Des Moines in the Southeastern Iowa Synod will host the first gathering for Lutheran CORE supporters in that synod on March 29. A new Lutheran CORE chapter has formed in the Southeastern Synod in the Ebenezer conference of that synod. Their first large gathering will be in Savannah, Ga., on April 27.

In all of these synods, and others, WordAlone members are now networking, organizing and meeting with our partners in Lutheran CORE to address the ELCA's steady drift from the Scriptures and confessions. About 80 people, despite snow and ice, attended a Feb. 2 meeting of a very active WordAlone chapter in the Buffalo, N.Y., area, WordAlone Regional Mission, to learn more about Lutheran CORE.

An advisory council for Lutheran CORE has been formed that includes former bishops, retired and active pastors, and theologians such as John Beem, Robert Benne, Carl Braaten, James Crumley, Jeffray Greene, George Mocko, James Nestingen, Richard Niebanck, Russell Saltzman, Ken Sauer, Morris Vaagenes and others. The council will meet in Chicago at the end of April.

A Lutheran CORE writing team prepared a frequently asked questions document that was posted on www.lutherancore.org before the release of the ELCA's draft social statement on Mar. 13. A narrative that lays out the reasons why the ELCA should uphold the biblical norms for sexuality will be posted in early April. The hope is that the documents will be helpful for discussions in your churches and synod assemblies leading up to the 2009 churchwide assembly.

You can learn more about Lutheran CORE on the web site and you can attend their annual gathering, which will be held in the first workshop session on Monday afternoon, April 14, during the WordAlone convention at Golden Valley, Minn.

If you would like to help organize a reform group in your area contact me at info@lutherancore.org or call me at 888-551-7254 or 717-898-0801. ♦

Could 'exclusions' happen here?

by Betsy Carlson, editor

Could "exclusions" spread from our neighbors to the north?

Church members were excluded last fall from the sacraments and from membership in their local church in Canada after voicing opposition to blessing homosexual relationships.

It happened, at Faith Lutheran Church in Kelowna, B.C. Their side of the story was posted recently on www.herewestand.ca/Our-Side-Story.pdf. According to the posting, they believe the problem started when the church voted at its regular congregational meeting in February 2007 to have a special meeting to discuss motions expected to come up at the National Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada that summer.

The church council did not call the special meeting by April, so one of the seven reportedly asked the council chairperson if she were going to call such a meeting or if they should seek enough signatures to call one. She is said to have replied, "Go for it." On Mother's Day, May 13, reportedly, the pastor "sternly reprimanded" the signature gatherers, calling their actions deceitful and a personal attack. By that time the signatures had been obtained and the special meeting had been called at a May 10 scheduled council meeting.

The special meeting was set for and held June 10. At that meeting the congregation voted against blessing same-sex relationships 56 to 5 with 5 undecided and 1 ballot spoiled. The excluded members' report stated the vote was to inform their convention delegate how Faith felt but still allow him vote his conscience.

Letters of exclusion sent to the seven former members of Faith Lutheran said they had "displayed conduct which is grossly unbecoming a member of the body of Christ." The letters said they spoke against

leadership in Faith in Kelowna, and made repetitive suggestions that questioned the elected leadership of both synodical and national churches.

The letters resulted from a process challenged by the seven as unconstitutional at several turns. A letter, from Pastor Anita Desjardins and Faith council chair Shirley Magel, requested their presence at a disciplinary hearing Sept. 6. The excluded seven chose not to attend what they said was shaping up as a kangaroo court. They tried to express in writing their constitutional concerns that an unconstitutional new disciplinary committee had been set up and that there were no specific charges stated against them as required. Their letter may have been ignored.

After the meeting the seven noted that there were persons from outside Faith involved with the discipline, which was supposed to have been strictly congregational.

However, the hearing went on and resulting exclusionary letters stated "Namely, because you have persisted in suggesting that the leadership of your church, both pastors and bishops, provide unfaithful stewardship of the Gospel, and so you have advocated discord that is contrary to the Holy Scriptures, therefore you have yourself violated both commandment and constitutional bylaws of your church. . . . Your words of accusation and menacing conduct have been deeply disturbing, and you have failed to curb your appetite for discord in the church."

The exclusion letters were signed by Pastor Nolan Gingrich, of the National Church Council and by the Faith council chair. The church council also reportedly met Sept. 6 and accepted the disciplinary committee's recommendation. The excluded seven questioned whether the council's special meeting had been properly or publicly called.

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Lutheran 'reads' on the Bible discussed

by Pastor Eric Swensson, New Rochelle, N.Y

The law of unintended consequences states that unintended consequences will overwhelm the intended ones if caution is not properly exercised. Now consider the North Carolina Synod memorial to the 2005 Churchwide Assembly requesting the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America clarify its understanding of the authority of Scripture.

Would it not be an ironic, unintended consequence if the five-year ELCA initiative "Book of Faith: Lutherans Read the Bible" birthed by that memorial, rather than clarifying the authority of Scripture, further confused the issue? An article by one of the guiding lights of the endeavor shows that this could well happen.

Erik Heen, M.Div. and Ph.D., serves as a consultant to the initiative in his capacity as professor of New Testament at The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Pa. I suspect his article, "The Theological Interpretation of the Bible" in the winter 2007 "Lutheran Quarterly" publication may be a "first draft" of a statement on the interpretation of Scripture for the future ELCA. [Heen presented a similar paper in Jan. 2007 at an early ELCA meeting for the Bible initiative; see: <http://www.elca.org/bookoffaith/resources/heen.pdf>]

He is to be congratulated for attempting the hard work of laying out a vision for, in his words, "an ecclesial and christocentric" model of interpretation. Heen is an accomplished scholar; his articles show he is extremely knowledgeable. Many would not disagree with much of what he says; in the following we would merely ask three things of all involved:

(1) to take another look at what Heen states

as the two competing principles of interpretation, inerrancy vs. efficacy

(2) to question the wisdom of viewing Section Two of the ELCA Constitution as a possibility of a new norming norm; and

(3) to ask how in the world a widespread use of reader-response is going to bring about anything than more polarization.

Others can weigh in on other issues that Heen touches upon such as whether the work of the late Gerhard Forde can actually be made to speak against the authority of Scripture. Since Forde's death in 2005, some have quoted him to support positions that he consistently opposed throughout his life and in all of his writings. May the following be seen not as opening shot in a war between the states but in the spirit of the "robust" dialogue invited by Heen himself. Hopefully, the initiative will be a rich exchange of how Lutherans are blessed by faithful interpretation of Scripture.

Heen attempted a nearly impossible task. (It is yet to be seen if clarity is indeed possible.) He is perhaps attempting nothing less than to correct the impression created by Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson who quoted Prof. Craig Nesson of the Wartburg Seminary that there are two valid and irconcilable hermeneutics [interpretations] at work in the ELCA:

Two "hermeneutics" or paradigms are at work among the members of the ELCA that make agreement difficult on scriptural and theological matters. The Rev. Craig L. Nesson, academic dean and professor of contextual theology, Wartburg Theological Seminary, an ELCA seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, writes that there

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is a "traditional approach" and a "contextual approach" in interpreting Scripture, both of which are valid and irreconcilable, Hanson told the bishops. (ELCA News Service, March 11, 2005)

We all know that we have a divided and diminishing denomination and one suspects Heen hopes we might all warm to his proposal and move onward. A quick caution; we do not wish to put any words in the mouth of either Hanson or Heen. To be sure, in his article Heen has stated that the understandings operating in ELCA Lutheranism are "inerrancy" and "efficacy" (the power of the Word to kill and raise up sinners in Law and Gospel), whereas Hanson had used the terms "traditional" and "contextual" (texts have new meanings in new contexts). However, they are addressing the same situation that exists in the ELCA: there are two very different "reads" on the Bible.

Heen errs on the issue of "inerrancy" to the detriment of the whole project. One misstep is that he confuses the issue of inerrancy with the issue of "authority of Scripture." He joins and perhaps intends to conflate [merge] two different terms in his reader's mind stating, "The problem with 'inerrancy,' in short, is that it is a human creation. The authority of Scripture that results, then, is also a human creation."

Not only does this relativize the whole transnational, interdenominational movement that falls under the heading "Authority of Scripture" (yes, Heen footnotes the Lutheran CORE statement on the Authority of Scripture - www.lutherancore.org/statement.shtml), but also Heen says some things about inerrancy that we all ought to think through.

For example, Heen states, "the Bible itself does not make a claim for inerrancy."

Lutherans who signed the Common Confession specifically and Lutherans in general with a positive appreciation of the authority of Scripture should resist all stereotyping as "fundamentalists" or "inerrantists." However, neither should they

demur too quickly that the Bible has no idea of what it is! True, neither the Bible, nor anyone else in the ELCA in recent memory until Heen, has used the word inerrancy. [The Common Confession is a seven-point statement (<http://commonco.ipower.com/confessmainset.htm>) accepted by many reform groups in the ELCA including the WordAlone Network—editor.]

But the Bible actually does make statements about Scripture: "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21) as well as the more oft quoted, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Inerrancy should be a red flag; one has to wonder in 2008 just who this person is who is fighting for it! Inerrancy in the ELCA is an answer to a question that is not being asked, and as such, intended or not, is a straw man, set up to be demolished by its maker. To state that the situation before us today in the ELCA is to choose between "inerrancy" and "efficacy" when no one is claiming inerrancy and everyone believes in efficacy is such a misreading of the situation one has to wonder why Heen has posed this scenario.

Despite what Heen says about the need for humility in the ELCA in dealing with theological opponents, he himself, as he admits, has gone to considerable effort to prove the other side wrong. To his credit Heen appeals for humility and warns against false stereotyping, but does so after he builds his argument that those in the ELCA who differ from him are proponents of inerrancy. This is probably understandable to those who are routinely called "fundamentalist." The problem, however, is not the slur, but rather a fundamental misreading of the situation by those leading the churchwide initiative, those who have been directed to provide clarity on the interpretation of Scripture.

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Or, perhaps it is just that we all move in such separate circles that the other is unknown. Perhaps, despite all the rhetoric about dialog, the other has not truly been invited to speak. Perhaps competing ideologies prevent listening to the other. Perhaps it is that so many on one side have qualms about speaking for fear of being branded "backward" so that the other side thinks that the former are a vanishing breed. Therefore the "other side" thinks there is not as great a need to listen as there is to move forward.

Again, we do not want to misjudge Heen's motives. We can be sure they are irreproachable. Rather, he has made his judgment of the situation in which we find ourselves regarding the state of theology and the interpretation of Scripture and has made his proposal. Therefore we need to get back to his article to see what exactly is being proposed.

Heen suggests that Chapter 2 of the ELCA Constitution shows our distinctive Christology and view of Scripture. He states that since Chapter 2 mentions Jesus Christ and the Word proclaimed as Law and Gospel before mentioning the Bible, he "read this to imply that the Bible is construed as the primary expression of the means of grace, but not the exclusive one." Something similar was seen in a "Use of Scripture and Confessions in Christian Ethics" dialogue in Metropolitan New York Synod in 2007 as well as in the ongoing online dialogues between revisionists and traditionalists, like www.alpb.org/forum/index.php [The ALPB is the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau—editor.]

The proposal that there is a ranking in order of importance in the list of Confessional documents subscribed to in the ELCA constitution is reminiscent of Pastor Jim Krauser's paper in the Metro NY dialogue (<http://www.mnys.org/default.asp?contentID=681>) that since the Formula of Concord comes last in the list of our Confessional documents, we do not therefore consider it as important as those that come first, therefore it doesn't matter what is said in the

Formula.

However, constitutions do not "imply" anything. The purpose of constitutions is to state things clearly for the purpose of good order.

Bringing the denominational constitution into a discussion on Christology will raise a red flag for those who already question the direction of ELCA. Why is the ELCA constitution being raised as a norm for the faith? Isn't that bound to confuse people perhaps resulting in a future generation's thinking the constitution is on the same level of authority as the Book of Concord?

The crux of Heen's "theological interpretation" is the use of the reader-response method of narrative criticism as guided by the theology of the cross. This brings us to speaking about reader-response theory. Why pose the one critical theory most open to subjective interpretations as a way forward for the interpretation of Scripture? At its basic level reader-response theory is a method for post-modern interpretation. It asks, "What does the Bible say?" And responds, "The Bible says what the reader thinks it says." It trusts that the reader will respond rightly. Heen proposes this can be combined with confessionalism.

His argument does not convince. This may be the reason why Heen spends so much time on the theology of the cross. According to Heen, if we are ruled by the theology of the cross and it is our compass we will then be able to use reader-response with integrity. I am becoming very suspicious of a Lutheranism in which one needs a Ph.D. in order to follow the discussion, yet poses narrative criticism (interpretation that focuses on the literary analysis of stories in the Bible) "as a simple method that can be understood by all."

Heen also uses the terms "Old Lutherans" and "New Lutherans," and this too could have some unintended consequences. Early in the article he begins this discussion in a way that is perhaps a helpful place to stand and survey these multiple horizons. Discussing the effects of the "Luther

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Renaissance" he posits two schools of thought: "In this 'New Lutheran' understanding, then, at the very least, there was some slippage in Luther between the concepts 'Word of God' and 'the Bible.' They were not completely coterminous as suggested by those who fell more naturally into the hermeneutical tradition of Old Lutheranism."

Clearly unintended consequences, such as dismissing or disrespecting some ELCA members, are in store for superficial usages of the terms "Old Lutheran." Worse results will come from any separation of Word of God from Scripture. Simply put, what is there in this New Lutheran theological interpretation of Heen's that is to prevent the subject from imposing the self's own ideology on God? The ELCA initiative needs to address the separating of Word from Scripture above all else.

The ELCA has four-and-a-half years left in this initiative. The ELCA may well end up with the post-modern interpretation of Scripture that many of its officeholders apparently want. We should be skeptical of the idea that the main thing is that the ELCA is not the Lutheran Church-Missouri

Synod, and since they hold to inerrancy, the ELCA must root inerrancy out.

Heen wrote that "one might even see the robust expression of the two quite different understandings of Scripture as a resource and not a deficit within the contemporary church." Therefore, at a minimum, let us at least get to know who these two different Lutherans actually are.

And so, let me end with an introduction. This is one side's stated understanding of the term "authority of Scripture": "We believe and confess that the Bible is God's revealed Word to us, spoken in Law and Gospel. The Bible is the final authority for us in all matters of our faith and life." (Common Confession, Article 3)

The other side is invited to recognize that the above understanding is not LC-MS. There is no mention of inerrancy. The Common Confession speaks of the efficacy of the Word in Law and Gospel. Perhaps the stumbling block is "final authority," but whatever it is, let's get back to the drawing board, no straw men this time, and let's have some proposals that everyone can indeed put to use. ♦

ReClaim Worship Conference set for June 22-23 at Luther Seminary

by Betsy Carlson, editor

Clergy and lay worship and music leaders are invited to attend "Theology of Christian Worship - Liturgical Issues Confronting Lutherans Today," ReClaim's Worship Conference June 22-23 at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

Music at the conference will include highlights from ReClaim's latest publications and works-in-progress. This conference will be inspiring and will help equip congregations for their worship, devotional and educational ministries, according to Pastor M. Luther Johnson, ReClaim president.

For a schedule, additional workshop

information and complete registration details, go online to www.ReClaimLutheranWorship.org.

For more information, contact: ReClaim Resources, 514 Atlantic Ave, Suite 101, Morris, MN 56267 or call 800-590-6001. ReClaim publishes Christ centered materials for use in church and home.

Musicians include Doug Norquist and Sharon Follingstad.

Keynote speakers include: Frank Senn on "Orthodoxia and the Name of God" (ELCA pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church,

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‘Is there any urgency in what we are doing?’

by Morris Vaagenes, retired pastor, Saint Paul, Minn.

The riveting words in the headline above leaped out at me from a sign behind the desk of Bob Cook, business manager at Central Lutheran Church in downtown Minneapolis. The message could not be missed by visitors to his office.

The year was 1972 and I had come to interview Cook for an article in a magazine, "A Call to Renewal," published by North Heights Lutheran Church where I was pastor. A highly effective ad campaign that Central sponsored had impressed me greatly. Cook was a driving force in a project placing a bold clear message on Twin City billboards and transit buses: "I LOVE YOU, JESUS C."

The question still challenges me today, "Is there any urgency in what I am doing? Is there any urgency in what we Lutherans are doing?"

Or are we simply satisfied with the status quo? If not, how urgently are we seeking the Holy Spirit's transforming work in our lives and church? Are we willing to pray earnestly for revival?

Jesus told us to be persistent in prayer. He said:

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. . . . If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Luke 11:9-10,13)

Jesus told us to be persistent in prayer.

The object of prayer, Jesus emphasizes, is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Before His ascension He declared that "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth." Thus it is urgent that we ask, seek and knock for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is essential for us today, as German Lutheran theologian Adolf Koberle affirms: "The chief object of prayer remains the petition for the gift of the Holy Ghost."

May it be that the steady decline in membership and influence of our Lutheran church is a result of our failure to seek fervently and persistently for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit? He is Lord, as we note in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

It is the Holy Spirit who gives power for witness. It is

the Spirit who speaks through us as we yield to him and obey his still small voice within us. The Holy Spirit bears witness to Jesus Christ. It is he who convicts of sin and who calls, gathers, enlightens and preserves us in the faith. He is essential for all aspects of the Christian life, witness and service.

Let us unite in praying fervently for the Holy Spirit to fill, guide and use us to the glory of God! Let us invite him to bring new life into us and into our Lutheran church! ♦

nine

(‘exclusions...’ Continues from page four)

As allowed by Faith’s constitution, the seven appealed in letters Sept. 11 and 27 to the council. On Sept. 21 a notice of special congregational meetings for voting members only, Oct. 2 and 3, went out, the first described as a time for the church council and pastor to inform the congregation of the reasoning behind the exclusions. The British Columbia Synod Bishop Gerhard Preibisch; his retired former assistant Keith Peterson; Interim Pastor Alfred Maier, at the time but no longer a conference dean and national church council member Gingrich were to attend.

The second meeting was to be a secret ballot on supporting or not supporting the exclusions. The congregation supported the exclusions by a majority, it was reported a few days later.

Local church officials acted as if the October meetings served as the appeal process for the excluded. However, the excluded seven sent word to the Oct. 2 meeting that they were never invited nor had the church council responded to their requests. The pastor reportedly responded

that she personally invited them. The seven have raised procedural and constitutional questions regarding the October meetings, and especially about who counted the votes and how they were counted. ♦

[Editor’s note: Bp. Preibisch asserts there are errors in the story provided to us and promises to send us a message about them, which will be reported in the next issue.]

(‘Reclaim...’ Continues from page eight)

Evanston, Ill. 60201); John T. Pless on "Can We Participate in the Atonement?" (Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.); and Walter Sundberg on "Does a Theology of Worship Matter?" (Luther Seminary, St. Paul).

Workshop presenters include keynote presenters and: Gracia Grindal on "Lutheran Hymnody and the ReClaim Hymnal" (Luther Seminary); Oliver Olson on his book "Reclaiming the Lutheran Liturgical Heritage" (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, retired scholar of the Reformation); and Paul Strawn on "What’s Real in the Real Presence?" (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Spring Lake Park, Minn.) ♦

‘All the news that fits’

A note to our readers: We cannot write in detail about all the news that’s fit to print because we have more than we can fit. So here’s a very abbreviated report about the Anglican Communion.
— Betsy Carlson, editor

The San Joaquin Diocese, formerly of The Episcopal Church, voted in December for a second time to leave The Episcopal Church. Under that church’s law, a second vote was necessary to leave.

Since then, the San Joaquin Diocese and its bishop, John-David Schofield, have accepted an invitation to join the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone, which is mostly in South America.

Episcopal church Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori has issued a threat to Schofield to “inhibit” or deny him the right to act as an ordained person. He has said she can’t discipline him because he no longer is a bishop in her province. In 2007, the Pittsburgh and Fort Worth dioceses each voted to leave The Episcopal Church. Their votes will have to be ratified in later votes at their next diocesan conventions. ♦

First WA book confronts ‘social’ church

by Betsy Carlson, editor

The WordAlone Network’s first book, "By What Authority? . . . Confronting Churches Who No Longer Believe Their Own Message" will be available this spring according to Network President Jaynan Clark Egland.

It is a collection of essays by 26 authors—lay and clergy—that challenges the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s and other denominations’ disregard for the authority of God’s Word over all matters of faith and life, she said recently.

“When naming the name and preaching the Word and forgiving sins are replaced with acknowledgment of all names, accommodation to all ways, ‘unsinning’ some sins and denying the Easter promise and the reality of His bodily resurrection, then a ‘social’ church has made a deadly exchange with the true church and waged war on the

Christian faith itself,” she said.

“This book is user friendly and will be accessible to every Christian who has asked aloud or meditatively wondered, ‘What is happening to society in general and the Christian church in particular?’”

It is about 270 pages. It will be available at the WordAlone Convention in April in Minnesota or by calling the office in New Brighton after April 16.

The authors include individuals familiar to WordAlone members such as Jim Nestingen, Steve Paulson and Bob Benne, and some not so familiar, including pastors, theologians and some laypersons including Lou Hesse, who formerly served on the ELCA sexuality task force; Bill Boniface, an Anglican; and Gary Diers, a dairy farmer. ♦

Lutheran Clergy Connect

Clergy Connect is a way for churches seeking a pastor or other leader to connect with candidates who believe that Christ alone is sufficient for the unity of the church and that the Word of God is the authority for the church. A full list, including more listings and detail, is posted at: www.wordalone.org/clergy.shtml

To list your search on Clergy Connect, mail or fax your request on church letterhead, signed by an officer or call committee chair, to: WordAlone Network, 2299 Palmer Dr. Suite 220, New Brighton, MN 55112 - Fax: 651 633-4260. Include: title, church’s name (city and state), contact person with phone number and e-mail address. Please inform us when you fill the position.

Morningside Lutheran Church Sioux City, Iowa

Position: Middle School Youth Director
Send résumés to: The Youth Committee, Morningside Lutheran Church, 700 S. Martha St., Sioux City, Iowa 51106

Calvary Lutheran Church Brookfield, Wisconsin

Position: Director of Youth and Children’s Ministry
Contact: E-mail résumés to holly@calvarylc.com or mail to: Calvary Lutheran Church, Attn: Personnel Team, 1750 North Calhoun Road, Brookfield, WI 53005. Deadline is April 1, 2008.

Zion and Zoar Lutheran Churches Finland and Tofte, Minnesota

Position: Pastor
Contact: Gary Nelson, Call Committee Chair, at garv@nelsoncomputer.com or 218-353-7749 (home), 218-341-4158 (cell) or 612-951-5649 (work).

Nazareth Lutheran Church Withee, Wisconsin

Position: Pastor
Contact: Dale Slezniak, Call Committee Chairman, at drdk44@msn.com or 715-703-0456.