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NETWORK NEWS

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WordAlone to preach, teach and confess

by Betsy Carlson, WordAlone editor

The WordAlone Network's goal is no longer to reform the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America but rather to serve as a support for pastors, congregations and individuals with its administrative, communication and education ministries, the Network's Board of Directors agreed this fall.

They called efforts to reform the ELCA churchwide organization "futile."

Board members suggested that WordAlone has a strong role to play for chapters and member congregations for the foreseeable future with Sola Publishing, Clergy Connect, an emerging chaplaincy corps and the Network News newsletter, according to proposed board minutes.

The talk of a new goal and a different role to play for the future of North American Lutheranism came from a long board discussion of WordAlone's future at the board's meeting Oct. 16-17 in Des Moines, Iowa. The new outlook came in response to actions taken at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, to the Lutheran CORE vision of creating a free-standing synod in the ELCA and to suggestions from Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) about how WordAlone can use its ministries now.

The churchwide assembly passed a new, ambiguous, undecided, divisive social

statement on many aspects of human sexuality as well as changing ministry and ordination standards to allow non-celibate homosexuals to serve as ordained and professional lay ministers in the ELCA.

At its September convocation in Indiana, Lutheran CORE created a free-standing synod, a churchly association, if you will, a community inside and outside the ELCA for like-minded congregations, individuals and reform groups. [In November Lutheran CORE announced that in addition to growing the synod, it would also propose the formation of a new Lutheran church for congregations that leave the ELCA – see p. 3 for more news on this.]

WordAlone staff told the board of encouraging words they heard from leaders of LCMC at the independent Lutheran group's convention in Fargo just a week earlier. LCMC leaders also reacted to a WordAlone proposal for congregations to join LCMC and form a new "Central" district in LCMC.

After their discussion, the board issued the following document.

Statement from the WordAlone Board on LCMC

In discussing the WordAlone Network's proposal for a Central District, LCMC had

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encouraged the WordAlone Network to expand the availability of its ministries and services to all LCMC congregations rather than focusing such assistance to congregations in a single LCMC district. LCMC leaders also encouraged the WordAlone Network to assist congregations make their transitions to LCMC.

Based on this input from LCMC, the board agreed that WordAlone should cooperate with LCMC by taking the following steps:

1) The WordAlone Network will seek to relate to all congregations in the LCMC by making available to them our various educational ministries, publications and supporting programs rather than focusing such assistance on one particular district.

2) The WordAlone Network will assist in guiding congregations to LCMC who are seeking alternatives for their current ELCA affiliations. The WordAlone Network will offer such assistance from its position “in-but-not-of” the ELCA. Recommendations offered might include either full transfer of affiliation to LCMC, or “dual affiliation” with the ELCA and LCMC—whichever better fits a congregation’s local situation. We recognize that LCMC may not be the only alternative or the best fit for every congregation seeking our assistance, but we will endorse it strongly and recommend it as deemed appropriate for the congregation.

3) The WordAlone Network recommends that a congregation join LCMC first, without joining a specific LCMC “district” at the same time. In LCMC, districts are optional and are meant primarily for fellowship and cooperative ministry. Thus the WordAlone Network will suggest that once a congregation has joined LCMC and become better accustomed to the association as a whole, then it might want to investigate the differences between current districts and consider joining one with which it finds affinity, or it might rather join with other congregations to form a new district.

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Lutherans take action, new church to be formed

by Mark C. Chavez, WordAlone vice president

There has been phenomenal activity among Lutherans in North America since the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America churchwide assembly in August.

Many individuals and churches are taking action now that the ELCA has placed itself in authority over God’s Word by adopting a new social statement on human sexuality that defies the Scriptural norms, by approving the blessing of same-sex relationships and by changing ministry standards to allow persons in such relationships to serve as ordained and lay ministers.

Attendance at regional meetings held in at least 20 states has ranged from a couple hundred to more than 700. Several meetings led to the formation of new regional groups in Lutheran CORE.

WordAlone and Lutheran CORE leaders have been overwhelmed with phone calls and email messages. Many are from laypersons who didn’t even know until after the churchwide assembly that the ELCA was thinking about approving of sex outside of marriage.

Laypersons and pastors are asking for help to stand against the course chosen by the ELCA and to make sure their churches uphold the authority of God’s Word over all matters of faith and life.

The leaders of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, the denomination that grew out of WordAlone in 2001, are also reporting an unprecedented number of inquiries from churches questioning their membership in the ELCA.

The largest gathering was the Lutheran CORE convocation in late September in Fishers, Ind. More than 1,200 people from the United States and Canada formed Lutheran CORE into a free-standing synod

and called for a reconfiguration of Lutheranism in North America.

In mid-November, Lutheran CORE announced that it would form a new Lutheran church in addition to expanding the current free-standing synod. Feedback from members following the convocation, including a report from a joint WordAlone and Lutheran CORE task force, made it clear that a new church is needed along with the synod. The free-standing synod will connect congregations that stay in the ELCA or Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) with those that leave for joint witness and mission. The synod includes churches and people both inside and outside the ELCA and ELCIC.

In Dec. and Jan. Lutheran CORE’s vision and planning working group will consult with partner renewal movements and congregations, and then with movements and Lutheran church bodies outside of Lutheran CORE. Late Jan. is the target date for the working group to prepare the first draft of a proposal. Lutheran CORE’s Advisory Council will review the draft in early Feb. before a final review by the steering committee. The goal is to make the proposal public by mid-Feb.

Work will begin on the constitution for the new church and possible amendments to Lutheran CORE’s constitution in March. The proposed drafts will be issued in July for review by Lutheran CORE members and partners. The Lutheran CORE Convocation will meet in Columbus, Ohio on Aug. 26-27 to consider the recommendations for reconfiguration.

Many have asked how many churches have directed financial support away from the ELCA churchwide offices and how many churches are leaving the ELCA.

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Let's agree to disagree. . . Not this time!

by Jaynan Clark, WordAlone president

Three months ago the ELCA churchwide assembly put God's Word concerning homosexual behavior up for a vote claiming for itself the authority to unsin sin. (An extended version of this article is posted at www.wordalone.org)

The assembly in August determined they could give blessing without a word from God and suspend a word of judgment without basis. They acted without any scriptural, confessional or historical basis for their actions. They held up as exemplary in public ministry—homosexual behavior—that which has been prohibited not only by the Bible but also by all church teachings and social and cultural prohibitions in 2000-plus years of history.

That was not the work of a “church” but of a human institution hell-bent on self-destruction that now must answer to God. No wonder believers and unbelievers across the globe are crying out.

Ecumenical relations are strained to the point of rupture, ethnic/multicultural ministry has been disrupted and church after church is breaking off its relationship with the ELCA in search of new relationships and renewed mission.

It is false for the ELCA to now give an impression of security and that this is no big deal, that it is not a church-dividing issue, that it will not affect you and that it is a matter that we can disagree on and yet live in harmony and peace.

The ELCA is appealing to a fabricated unity that tries to trump truth.

The division is already a present reality and, according to Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession, is the responsibility of the bishops who will now have to answer to God for their schismatic actions. It has already affected you and your neighbor and it cannot be ignored.

The ELCA attempts to quell the “opposition” are unconscionable and cannot be explained as anything other than attempts to quiet the uprising against its departure from the one holy, apostolic, Christian church and its witness.

Are all the ELCA news releases and talk meant to convince church goers and givers to keep attending and giving because the vote was no big deal?

Clearly there seems to be a realization by some of the ELCA leadership that they underestimated the response to changing the teaching and practices of the ELCA in regards to human sexuality, marriage and ordination.

This is not a point of mere disagreement on an issue but of pure departure from the Christian faith.

The reason all of this is such a big deal is that none of this was about sex or even homosexuality. Opposition to this vote has no more to do with the homosexuals than the full communion vote in 1999 had to do with the Episcopalians.

What was put up for a vote both times was the authority of the Word of God and whether the church has the right to mandate teaching and practices that are not scriptural and that conflict with our Lutheran confessions.

The action of the 2009 churchwide assembly must be rightly identified as contrary to God's Word and therefore no “good news” at all. This is a matter of significance that knows no bounds historically, geographically or temporally. There are eternal consequences for leading Jesus' flock astray.

Therefore the WordAlone Network continues to engage in the work of herding sheep to safe and faithful pastures. For the question before every church and each individual Lutheran Christian is no longer why

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Against the holy blasphemers

by Prof. Steve Paulson, professor of systematic theology, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

[This paper is one of several prepared by WordAlone's Theological Advisory Board as a resource for individuals and churches considering their responses to the crisis over the authority of God's Word in the ELCA. The papers will soon be available as a packet on wordalone.org.]

In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes:

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct. They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them (1:24-32).

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in a vote at its 2009 churchwide assembly has now taken upon itself to “approve those who practice” these things. How did this happen? We should know what power we are up against and how to oppose it.

Perhaps it is the old “Lutheran” problem with antinomianism, which literally means to stand “against the law.” Christ is the end of the law, is he not? If you have the Gospel of Jesus Christ, what need is there of the law? The highest trust in Christ is to ignore the law! Yes, of course [the antinomians say].

But this call to ignore is not speaking to your flesh, to give license to the flesh, as if that were the freedom of Christ in the gospel. “Ignore the law! Moses is dead!” is not spoken to the old, sinful self as if that old sinner is now set free to do what it wants. The end of the law is in Christ alone, and so the law only comes to an end in faith in this Christ whose mercy is the **forgiveness of sin**.

In Luther's day a dispute arose when the clever preacher John Agricola proposed that the way to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ was to leave out the preaching of the law entirely. The slogan applied to this idea was, “The law belongs in city hall, the Gospel alone belongs in the pulpit.”

Wouldn't that be nice for a preacher? No more need to accuse anyone or bother with the law even when it is plainly in the Scripture to be preached. But that is not true preaching.

Moreover, Agricola rejected any role at all for the law in Christian life. He speculated that the story of Christ was the only thing needed to call people to repentance. The law could be left to politicians and police. Now, if there are such preachers who have decided that law is not needed for repentance and who then preach only the assurance of God's love, they should attend to the Lutheran Confessions and consider carefully the grave mistake they are making,

The Smalcald Articles also say [III, 3, 4] that the New Testament retains, teaches and emphasizes this function of the law, that it reveals sin and God's wrath. But “to this it immediately adds

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(‘Blasphemers...’ Continues from page five)

the promise of grace through the Gospel.” And the Apology [IV, 257] says: “The preaching of the law is not sufficient for genuine and salutary repentance; the Gospel must also be added to it.” That means that both teachings must be alongside each other and must be taught together, but in a proper order and with the appropriate distinction. The antinomians, or nomoclasts, are properly condemned because they throw the proclamation of the law out of the church and want to reprove sin and teach contrition and sorrow not on the basis of the law but only on the basis of the gospel (Solid Declaration V: Law and Gospel).

The greater problem in the ELCA, however, is called enthusiasm, or fanaticism. Fanatics are a specific type of infiltrating and clandestine false prophet. They are self-righteous. They are on a mission. They believe that they hold the key to the future. They are decidedly **not** antinomian, in fact they believe in the law alone. The trick is that the law is held by them with a twist.

They believe they are the messengers and purveyors of a **new and higher law** than had ever existed before in church and world—even laws given by God himself. Furthermore, this new and higher form of law comes in the person of the Holy Spirit who gives them new spirit-led revelations that are not in Scripture but are supposed to be part of God’s hidden plan.

Plan for what?

For making the church a more righteous, perfect group of saints who will then be a light to the nations by living out the love the law requires. Fanatics are never very creative. Fanatics think that God has communicated the new law through them (such as in a new ecclesiastical vote at a churchwide assembly).

They believe they are enlightened. This is why the issue of homosexuality has been taken up as a matter of rights or righteousness along with the supposed movement of the Holy Spirit to “do a new thing.”

Fanatics think that the Holy Spirit has given them a new word not found in Scripture that approves of homosexual acts because a higher righteousness has now been revealed to them than has ever existed in history.

They **know**, even though they have no word from God to stand on. The unprecedented newness is considered a mark of the divine itself. When fanatics get rolling, no calls to the importance of a church tradition of 2,000 years matter—in fact it proves their point that they are more spiritual because they are not bound to this tradition. No calls to creation and God’s preservation of it in family, church and state matter, since they live beyond “natural law” and despise “created orders” as if they were Nazi propaganda.

No calls to the impact on ecumenical relations with other churches matter because a higher calling than church fellowship is ringing in their ears. No calls to the words of Scripture matter either. Each of these is considered old law, and now that the spirit has come through them to give new law who would want to go back? The reasoning is empty, the heart is darkened and yet fanatics are positively certain of the spiritual truth they bring.

It may help you to know that Luther ran into two types of fanatics in his day. One was a type that looks like it comes from the Reformation or Protestantism but opposed our teaching at its core. This was especially prominent in spiritualists like Luther’s one-time colleague at Wittenberg University, Karlstadt, and his destruction of images in churches because the law of Moses should be extended to require it despite the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The other was Müntzer who thought he was leading the peasants by the revelation of the Holy Spirit to a greater kingdom of peace and prosperity by rebelling against authority—but he only got them killed. They wanted “reform” in the church and society, but not by preaching the law and the Gospel. They wanted a new and higher form of law supposedly revealed to them by the Holy Spirit.

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The other fanatic of Luther’s time was the Pope in Rome. As different as these appeared in history, theologically they shared something. They stopped thinking of Christ’s forgiveness of sins as the Gospel and began thinking of the church as a kingdom of the righteous that lives by a higher law than that operating in God’s creation. The problem for them was that yesterday’s law always ended up accusing them, and in order to be free they had to channel a new law for a new day.

So the dream naturally arose that if yesterday’s law accused, perhaps a higher, better law could be attained that would actually make the church and its people the kind of righteous kingdom Christ wants. They thought the law as it applies to Christians in particular must be adaptable to changes in history, and some special mechanism must have had to supervise and direct this change. Since the Bible was yesterday’s law, some Spirit-given power outside Scripture must be available to them to make new Christian laws.

Yesterday’s law kills, tomorrow’s opens up the possibility of a new, better society, so goes the fanatic. They think the Spirit works through them to reveal a new, better law than the ones found in the past—yes even better than Scripture’s laws. They see Moses not as dead, but as old and stuck in the past and in need of “reform” and so they spout slogans like, “Reformed and always reforming!” They look at people who preach the letter of the law in Scripture as “fundamentalists” who have lost the hope that the law can be improved. The Pope thinks Lutherans are stuck on “Scripture alone” this way!

So do the fanatics today in the ELCA. But whereas the Pope has come to believe that the Holy Spirit works through the **magisterium** of the church of which he is the head, the ELCA now has come to believe that the Spirit has moved through their meetings and convocations and studies and finally the calling down of the Holy Spirit at an assembly and voting as if they were

instruments of the Spirit’s new wisdom. They say, “Come Holy Spirit,” but they should beware of when that true Holy Spirit comes and finds them masquerading as his helpers.

For at least 200 years this kind of spiritualism has been brewing in the “enlightened” world that is Europe and America. Such spiritualists call this a **zeitgeist**—a spirit of the times that is moving away from past morals and doctrines to something higher, better, more free. They see people who disagree with them as “traditionalists,” “conservative,” “patriarchal,” “fundamentalists,” who think of God as Father, and the law as unchanging.

Instead, fanatics think they are “of the spirit,” not as the Spirit that blows where God wills—to Christ—but as a spirit of the age that provides new and better laws that are supposed to foster the inevitable progress of society. In other words, for fanatics, spirit is simply “oral law” that fills in where written laws have become outdated. Jesus faced such Pharisees almost daily, and never tired of twisting them into knots over their plans for applying the law to new situations. But it is not the law that will make you righteous, but Christ’s forgiveness alone.

Even while the fanatics have virtually emptied all of their churches, they have a sense of fate that they are bound to win. History is on their side, so it seems. Who did not see this vote in the ELCA coming for years? Fanaticism appears inevitable, as if it is fate itself. It is bewitching because the devil gives the impression that it cannot be beat.

People keep saying this matter in the ELCA is only a generational issue; young people “get it,” because they have not grown up with fears and false information, and so the church must simply wait for the elders to die. Others say that it is a “moral” issue that does not touch “doctrine,” and therefore people can agree to disagree. There is no place for pointing out the blasphemy in the ELCA.

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(‘Blasphemers...’ Continues from page seven)

Religion has become, for fanatics, a way of establishing righteousness for people who have been on the margins of society and they do appear truly holy for doing this. Religion then becomes inclusion in the higher law of love. It tries to make people righteous by giving them a new law, and so their consciences can finally be comforted. Before, homosexual acts were excluded, now they are approved. This, however, is not the Gospel; it is a change in law, in the form of a new law that is put before people as the place for their hope.

We are in a time of fanaticism. Coming to grips with this is necessary for preachers and for hearers of the Gospel. Will you cling to your old Father God, or will you go with the future—the spirit? So it seems one must choose sides between two types of legalism fighting for the right to be the true church—the conservative or progressive.

Of course, the odd man out in fanaticism is always Jesus Christ. He brings nothing other than the forgiveness of sins. The true preacher applies forgiveness to actual, ungodly sinners, who have been revealed as such by the preaching of the law. The solution to getting rid of fanatics is true preaching, even though it appears as the weakest thing in the world. There are always two words in preaching: the **rebuke**, and the **forgiveness**. Fanatics do not want to be sinners, so they gather together, vote on it and find they are not!

These are self-righteous idolaters. Luther once called them “holy blasphemers.” Simon the Pharisee did not recognize his sin and wanted nothing to do with Mary Magdalene who was a sinner who had met her Christ. Mary did recognize her sins and poured them out in tears on the One who took the sin upon Himself. Jesus then forgave Mary, but not Simon.

The holy blasphemer is a fanatic who blasphemes God in the first commandment while holding up their higher form of righteousness that sees itself as progressive, welcoming, gracious, open, marching on the road of civil rights, inspired and the like.

Luther continues, “Let us not be found in the number of those who are without sin and imagine themselves holy, or justify their sins and refuse to be corrected.”

Removing homosexuality from the need of forgiveness, while thinking yourself just, is heartless, eternal cruelty. After all, Christians know they are sinners in the eyes of God. They not only know it, they feel it in desires of a sinful nature, but they do not let these rule over them or let this sin rage against the hope that is in Christ himself and alone.

True Christians are in a battle whose final victory is already won, but while this old world lasts we feel the sins, confess them, submit to discipline, resist them—and the whole while are confident that these sins are forgiven. No fanatic can give you this, even a whole group of fanatics or a whole epoch of them. Until we die bodily and spiritually to the old leaven of sin we remain **godly sinners in Christ**, not **holy blasphemers**. ♦

(‘Foundation...’ Continues from page eleven)

It gave Lutherans Concerned/North America \$200,000 over two years to “organize and support a grassroots collaborative effort to change existing denominational policy at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America toward the full inclusion of LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] people of faith.” The foundation also gave \$50,000 to Lutherans Concerned/North America to influence the 2007 churchwide assembly.

Lutherans Concerned / North America, based in St. Paul, Minn., works for the “full inclusion” of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their church and congregations, according to its web site.

The Arcus report says the religion and values program seeks to “change LGBT exclusionary denominational policies; build an LGBT inclusive, faith-based, social justice movement; and refute beliefs that portray gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people as sinful and immoral.” ♦

Confusion reigns in ELCA since assembly

by Betsy Carlson, editor

Confusion reigns in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as a result of decisions to recognize homosexual relationships and to allow partnered homosexuals to serve in the church’s professional ministries.

The decisions were made by the churchwide assembly in August in Minneapolis.

How will the assembly’s actions be interpreted? Proposals for implementing the new ministry policies have said the church has had one set of standards concerning ministry and would continue to have one, though new, set—ordaining and rostering persons in same-sex relationships.

An early draft of implementing suggestions stated that no one could be denied candidacy strictly because they are in a same-sex relationship.

After reviewing these proposals for several hours this fall, the Conference of Bishops asked the church council not to accept any implementing proposals at its November meeting as had been planned. The church council did vote to hold off consideration of such documents until its April 2010 meeting.

But a professor of systematic theology at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, S.C., even has raised questions about exactly what was passed at the churchwide assembly.

Prof. Michael Root cited concerns Oct. 31, in the blog www.LutheransPersisting.wordpress.com, about changes made to proposed Sexuality Task Force resolutions by the ELCA church council at its March 2009 meeting.

He wrote:

In its detailed description of its proposal, the task force was quite clear that it was proposing “structured flexibility” as something to be implement-

ed, something not now in place, that would allow various groups to opt out of any national policy. The general rule was expressed early in the text: “Decisions about policy that serve the interests of one or another group will not be acceptable.” It granted that honoring bound conscience “may lead to some diversity of practice within this church.”

The report also clearly implied that this structured flexibility would be a new set of procedures in the ELCA, he said. Root suggested in his blog that structured flexibility would have protected any congregation, candidacy committee, synod or bishop from having to violate a bound conscience by approving or calling a candidate in a same-gender relationship.

Root noted that in March 2009, the church council agreed to changes in proposed task force ministry resolutions. Churchwide officials have called them friendly amendments, editorial and non-substantive.

“The proposals were changed in a fundamental way,” Root wrote. “A proposal that sought to favor no particular group or opinion and provided for diversity of practice became a uniform national policy.”

Root noted that not much was made at the assembly of the fact that the task force proposals had been changed. He said an ELCA FAQ sheet described the changes but he said he, and he suspected many others, may not have read it as closely as they had the task force’s recommendations. He said many people at the assembly still held the task force report as the definitive word on the ministry resolutions.

He acknowledged that representatives of the ELCA Vocation and Education unit said at the assembly that the proposal was not local option and that structured flexibility already had been in place.

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('WA to preach...' Continues from page two)

4) *In working with congregations, the WordAlone Network will provide information on the distinctiveness of LCMC as an association of congregations, with its congregationally-based polity, as opposed to a structured hierarchy more similar to the three decision-making levels of the ELCA with its congregations, synods and church-wide organizational structure.*

5) *The WordAlone Network will encourage individuals and congregations to remain members of the WordAlone Network, even if they join LCMC or leave the ELCA for another entity or remain in the ELCA to witness.*

6) *The WordAlone Network will continue its work in building connections between itself and other confessional Lutheran associations and groups including, among others, LCMC.*

The board and staff of WordAlone want to offer special thanks to the members of LCMC for their clear and intentional work in extending hospitality to visitors and making newcomers feel welcome at their convention.

In other board action, the board appointed WordAlone president Jaynan Clark and board member David McGettigan to serve on a Lutheran CORE-WordAlone joint task force. Lutheran CORE previously appointed Lutheran CORE Steering Committee chair Pastor Paull Spring and committee members Ryan Schwarz and Pastor Scott Grorud, who is a WordAlone board member too. Mark Chavez, who is on the staff of both organizations, and Grorud will represent both Lutheran CORE and WordAlone.

The board learned that the WordAlone convention will be April 25-26 at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minn. The board discussed themes for the convention and agreed it should be positive and forward looking on the future of confessional Lutheranism in North America. ♦

('Not this time...' Continues from page four)

would they leave the ELCA but, "How could you stay?"

To answer faithfully for the sake of your witness and ministry to your unbelieving neighbor and all the children to whom you tell the message of salvation in Jesus Christ alone is the determining factor of importance here, not a mere question of institutional alignment.

As followers of Jesus, hear His call to stand up for your faith in Him alone and resist the temptation to engage in idolatry loving or pledging allegiance to a human denomination rather than to Him and His true Church, both hidden and revealed. ♦

('Confusion...' Continues from page nine)

"What was never said, however, was that this might be understood as a shift from what was in the task force report and that voters should be aware of this shift," Root wrote.

"If the church leadership . . . ignore(s) the clear intent of the [Sexuality Task Force] report, they will break faith with their own process and with the people of the ELCA," he concluded. ♦

('New church...' Continues from page three)

Comprehensive information is not available, nor will it be for some time. What is known is that the ELCA Church Council in mid-November cut the 2010 budget by ten percent and 40 positions were cut from the churchwide offices.

The total number of churches leaving the ELCA in 2009 may not be known until next summer. The ELCA typically reports that information in July. The total number of congregations who vote to leave the ELCA in 2010 will likely not be known until summer 2011. ♦

Foundation gave \$250,000 to lobby group to push gay agenda at ELCA churchwide assemblies

by Betsy Carlson, editor

A secular group gave a grant of \$200,000 to Lutherans Concerned/North America to organize and support work to change Evangelical Lutheran Church in America policies on homosexual behavior.

Changes in church policies to recognize partnered same-sex relationships and to allow partnered homosexuals to serve as ministers were approved by the ELCA 2009 Churchwide Assembly in August in Minneapolis.

The Arcus Foundation, Kalamazoo, Mich., states in its 2008 annual report that it seeks to overcome cultural and policy obstacles

that are "barriers to full acceptance, respect and human rights for LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] people."

Jon Stryker, described in business magazines as an architect, heir to his grandfather's Stryker Corp. and a billionaire, created the Arcus Foundation in 2000. Since its beginning the foundation has made grants of more than \$50 million to support homosexual, bisexual and transgender causes.

According to the Arcus 2008 report, its religion and values program made 19 grants totaling more than \$2 million last year.

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Lutheran Clergy Connect

Clergy Connect is a way for churches seeking a pastor or other leader to connect with candidates who believe that the Word of God is the authority for the church. More listings and details are posted at: www.wordalone.org/clergy.shtml

Send your request to list your search 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.

Concordia Lutheran Church Kingsburg, California

Position: Lead Pastor

Contact: Laurie Bolton, Call Facilitator at lbolton@lightspeed.net or 559-259-7898.

Peaks of Glory Lutheran Church Big Timber, Montana

Position: Interim Pastor

Contact: Alan Baglien, Senior Pastor, at btlutherp@mtintouch.net or 406-932-5723 or 406-931-0919.

Brooklyn Park Lutheran Church Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

Position: Pastoral Care Pastor

Contact: Dave Dalbey at ddal3347@hotmail.com or 763-242-9701.

Our Saviors Evangelical Lutheran Church Hartland, Wisconsin

Position: Lead Pastor

Contact: Carol Emmel, Call Committee Chairperson, at 414-573-6088.