

# NETWORK NEWS

**WordAlone  
Network annual  
convention  
registration  
material enclosed!  
April 26-27,  
Golden Valley, Minn.**



2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220  
New Brighton, MN 55112

Tel: 651-633-6004 Toll Free: 888-551-7254

Fax: 651-633-4260

E-Mail: [wordalone@poppp.net](mailto:wordalone@poppp.net)

Website: [www.wordalone.org](http://www.wordalone.org)

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
Paid  
Permit No. 7149  
St. Paul, MN

### Your contributions are greatly appreciated

WordAlone® Network is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation, and your contributions are fully tax-deductible. Please use the envelope in this newsletter to help with your support.

### MOVING?

Please help us keep our records current. Send your new address, phone number and e-mail information to the WordAlone office. Or, save a stamp and send us an e-mail message at [wordalone@poppp.net](mailto:wordalone@poppp.net).

# NETWORK NEWS

Volume 10, Issue 2

MARCH - APRIL 2009

## WordAlone Network responds to ELCA human sexuality proposals

by Betsy Carlson, Network News editor

Calling a proposed social statement and recommendations on human sexuality by a task force of the largest Lutheran denomination in the United States too lengthy and confusing, leaders of the WordAlone Network, the faithful opposition, compared its recommendations to smoke and mirrors.

President of the grassroots network, Pastor Jaynan Clark Eglund commented recently, "When voters in many states uphold traditional marriage better than church leaders and the mainline denominations as a whole, then you know something is really out of whack."

The WordAlone Network will work to defeat all the recommendations of the task force, she said. The proposed social statement and recommendations will go before the churchwide church council in March and the churchwide assembly this coming August for possible alteration and acceptance.

The task force, in its proposed social statement, says the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America should consider date rape "an egregious violation of friendship," should discourage "co-habitation arrangements outside of marriage" and should learn to live with its disagreements over homosexual behavior.

As for marriage between a man and a woman, the proposed social statement says that based on history, the church should have confidence that marriage vows, supported by civil law, could create a lifetime relationship of commitment and cooperation.

However, in almost the same breath, the proposed statement suggests "some, though not all, in this church and within the larger Christian community" have concluded that marriage is the term to use for same-sex couples entering into "lifelong, monogamous relationships."

After discussing the accountability that marriage, or civil unions, could bring to same-sex relationships, the social statement notes that ELCA members have come to differing conclusions, based on their consciences, about same-sex relationships. This includes whether and how to recognize lifelong commitments.

Like the preliminary draft social statement a year ago, this proposed social statement says the church should include not just the differing opinions, but also the differing practices concerning same-sex relationships as ways to love and serve the neighbor.

*(Continues on page two)*

*(“WordAlone responds...” Continues from page one)*

Following on the heels of the proposed social statement, the task force recommends—in a separate and required document—that the delegates at this August’s churchwide assembly in Minneapolis vote on four resolutions in a certain order. The four votes would lead to acceptance of same-sex relationships and allowing persons in same-sex relationships to serve as ordained or lay ministers in the ELCA.

If the assembly defeats one of the resolutions, or questions, the task force says the voting would stop before any remaining questions.

The first two ask the assembly to accept “in principle” same-sex, monogamous, life-long relationships and to allow persons in such relationships to serve as ministers. The third question admits the church does not have consensus on the issues and asks the ELCA to respect members’ differing opinions on same-sex questions, which it says are based on individuals’ consciences.

The fourth question, in fact, asks the denomination to be flexible and allow persons in same-sex relationships to serve as ministers in some congregations, synods and ministries. This opens the door to local option.

“The first three questions are just smoke and mirrors for the last one. If we accept something ‘in principle,’ haven’t we accepted it in deed,” asked Pastor Mark Chavez, vice president of WordAlone.

Clark Eglund asked, “Is consensus our new ‘way’ for finding ‘truth’? I thought Jesus was the Way and the Truth. That doesn’t change whether we agree or not.

“Local option is, ironically, the negation of their entire desire to reach consensus. With individual, congregational and synodical option, there is no standard at all, just the celebration of self over against the Christian understanding of community and true freedom.” ♦

## Index

- page one** — WordAlone Network responds to ELCA human sexuality proposals
- page three** — Early supporter of WordAlone cause dies this winter — ‘Everyone did what was right in his own eyes’
- page four** — WordAlone board meeting summary and comments
- page six** — Banff Commission report is recommended reading
- page eight** — Canadian provincial supreme court judge reinstates four expelled from their church
- page eleven** — Lutheran Clergy Connect



Network News is published six times yearly by the WordAlone® Network.

Jaynan Clark Eglund: president  
 Mark C. Chavez: vice president  
 Betsy Carlson: editor

**- Please photocopy & distribute -**

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

## Early supporter of WordAlone cause dies this winter

by Betsy Carlson, editor

The WordAlone Network has lost one of its early voices with the death this winter of Rev. Dr. Robert J. Marshall who spoke at WordAlone’s first gathering in 1999 in Mahtomedi, Minn. He was 90 years old and died in Allentown, Penn.

Marshall’s speech to the Mahtomedi meeting may be accessed at [www.wordalone.org/docs/marshall-feb-1999.shtml](http://www.wordalone.org/docs/marshall-feb-1999.shtml)

He had served as president of the Lutheran Church in America from 1968 to 1978 and as president of that denomination’s Illinois Synod for six years before that. Marshall graduated from Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, Maywood, Ill., a predecessor institution to the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC).

He was ordained in 1944 and served as a pastor in California. Marshall taught at Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Penn., and Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, before being elected president of the synod and then the Lutheran Church in America (LCA).

Marshall earned his doctorate at the University of Chicago and taught Old Testament at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, S.C., and at LSTC. He also was a senior scholar in res-

idence at LSTC.

The family asks that memorials be sent to the Robert J. Marshall Graduate Fellowship, which the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago established some years ago.

His wife Alice died in 1998. He is survived by their two children: Robert E. Marshall and the Rev. Margaret A. (Peggy) Niederer, Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Leonia, N.J.; a sister, Dorothy Fisher; five grandchildren; and a great-grandson.

A funeral was held in January in Burlington, Iowa, where he was born, according to the News Service of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The ELCA also reported memorials were scheduled in February at Christ Chapel, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, S.C., and at Egner Chapel, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, and at 2 p.m., March 8, Augustana Chapel, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. The Rev. H. George Anderson, former presiding bishop of the ELCA, will preach. The Rev. James Kenneth Echols, LSTC president, will preside. ♦

## ‘Everyone did what was right in his own eyes’

by Mark C. Chavez, vice president

It has been breathtaking to watch the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality assert central Lutheran teachings that somehow Lutherans had missed or not understood for nearly five centuries. The task force’s proposed social statement, Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust (HSGT), and its recommendations on rostering practicing homosexu-

als, The Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies (RRMP), which were released on Feb. 19, also have breathtaking discoveries.

In last year’s first draft of a social statement the task force claimed that Lutherans don’t

*(Continues on page ten)*

# WordAlone board meeting summary and comments

by Jaynan Clark Eglund, president

As the WordAlone Network board of directors met in January for their first quarter meeting of 2009 in Baltimore, Md., they were located minutes away from a railroad platform where history was being made. A train rolled through transporting then president-elect Barack Obama to Washington, D.C., to be inaugurated as the 44th president of the United States.

As he made his whistle-stop speech only minutes away I listened to members of WordAlone's board struggle with many of the same issues that we face as a nation: an economy in shambles, which does not bode well for manufacturers and retailers let alone non-profit organizations; a society that seems to embrace changing everything, even that which we have no authority to change; and a nation where the churches that in times of turmoil once stood firm on the Word of God, anchored in our one Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, are now adrift conforming to the very society they are called to speak a transformational Word to.

The irony of it all was trumped only by the sense of urgency to offer that which was historically handed over by our church leaders and denominations but now has been abandoned, which is that our hope is in our Lord Jesus Christ as the Living Word of God and not in any human institution or government agency.

Opportunities to spread this word of hope knocked several times in many ways. Board members visited churches in three states on Sunday morning in both urban and suburban settings – New Jersey, Maryland and Pennsylvania. We also had the opportunity to meet with a group of concerned Lutherans on Friday evening at St. John Lutheran Church, Linthicum, Md. Their questions echoed those of the past several

board meetings and similar forums.

People across the map from the West Coast in October (board meeting in Washington state) to the opposite coast in January, all have witnessed to the fact that their “church” (that is, their denomination) has left them. They now look to WordAlone, its ministries and its work together with other reform movements as a part of Lutheran CORE as their “home”. . . yes, even their “church.”

The level of frustration is rising; the fear is becoming widespread that the 2009 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Churchwide Assembly voting members will do something really catastrophic for the future of the ELCA. The people in the pews are expressing a common desire to “get on with doing the true mission of the church.”

Knowing this full well, the members of the board together with the staff of WordAlone are preparing in every way to be able to meet these challenges and appeals straight on. This board meeting was taken up with mainly discussion of strategies and plans. No “one size fits all” vision or strategy is going to suffice. What WordAlone has been working for will just be stepped up—a clear confession of our faith in the Word of God and its authority over us.

We will continue to produce through Sola Publishing more faithful educational materials for children and adults. We will continue to help seminarians in their scholarly journeys so that their educations might be truly faithful to God's Word and His mission to make disciples. We will increase our efforts to connect churches in the call process with confessional Lutheran pastors.

We will continue to inform individuals and

*(Continues on page five)*

*(‘board meeting...’ Continues from page four)*

congregations about what is happening in the ELCA and all the other mainline denominations. We will continue to network and build relationships among local churches and the many ministries such as Institute of Lutheran Theology, ReClaim Resources and other Lutheran agencies doing faithful ministry such as Youth Encounter, World Mission Prayer League, China Service Ventures, Eastern European Mission Network and Mt. Carmel Ministries, to name a just few. We will be an active, working part of the coalition for reform, Lutheran CORE. We will continue to work with Lutheran churches within and outside the ELCA.

The board is preparing a document that will assist congregations and members in their deliberations about how to respond to the crisis in the ELCA. The board will also be recommending to the WordAlone annual convention, to be held April 26-27 at Calvary Lutheran in Golden Valley, Minn., that the size of the board be gradually reduced from twelve to nine members over the next three years.

The theme for the annual convention is “The Main Thing – Proclaim Jesus!” and will concentrate on the true, primary mission of the church: **evangelism**. We will offer a variety of evangelism workshops that deal with the different settings individuals and churches are in their faith journeys. There also will be important and timely discussion and action on the sexuality recommendations to the churchwide assembly in August in Minneapolis.

The board worked with the staff on a realistic budget for 2009. In our present national economic state of turmoil this was not an easy task. The board was presented with a first-ever deficit budget for WordAlone. To be realistic, we have not inflated projected revenues while we have reduced expenses as much as possible without cutting much-needed staff. It is a difficult time for all non-profits and yet 2008 was a better year for WordAlone than many others.

Thanks to all of you, our supporters and members of the Network, we finished 2008 financially stable and hopeful. Though we have very little in our reserves, which has always been the case. So we will press on toward our goal, always reflecting on the words in Acts 5 that remind us of who we are, whose we are and Whom we are called to serve.

The board heard a report from the Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT) given by board member Doug Dillner, who is now also a member of the ILT staff. The institute is experiencing financial worries in this faltering economy like everyone else. In response to their concerns, the individual members of the board pledged their personal support to help fund the programs of ILT, and WordAlone continues to support ILT financially by gifting a part-time staff member to help them accomplish their goals. WordAlone has also allowed ILT to solicit support from its donor base.

God has truly blessed our confession and witness thus far, to Him be the thanks and praise, to us comes the call to engage. ♦



**Don't miss the next big step in the expansion of Lutheran CORE**



**LUTHERAN CORE CONVOCATION**

**Christ the Savior Lutheran Church, Fishers, Ind.**

**Sept. 25-26**

**Look for more information in the weeks ahead**



# Banff Commission report is recommended reading

by Carolyn Nestingen, WordAlone board member

A year ago, in the shadow of the Canadian Rockies in Banff, Alberta, a group of Canadian and American Lutheran theologians met and discussed how God's Word applies to the church today, given changes in cultural norms.

Funded by Ascension Lutheran Church in Calgary, this group, The Banff Commission, met, thought, talked, prayed and formulated a statement intended to guide individuals and congregations who are seeking guidance in interpreting God's Word in today's world. A compilation of those discussions and of the papers presented there has been published recently by the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, [www.alpb.org](http://www.alpb.org), and is helpful and encouraging reading.

The Lutheran Church in Canada, a country without separation of church and state, has been confronted with enforcement of laws that prohibit discrimination against anyone based on sexual preference. Without such a shield from civil law, a Lutheran bishop excommunicated nine members of a British Canadian Lutheran congregation in 2007 for refusing to consider calling as their pastor a practicing homosexual. It was out of concern for this kind of action in the name of the church that Ascension Lutheran Church, a sister congregation, thought careful examination and study of how God's Word applies to contemporary life might be useful.

I want to summarize a couple of the statements issued by the commission, one a "Declaration on the Malaise That Affects the Church of Our Days" and the other "Advice to Congregations and Pastors Living in the Midst of the Current Malaise of the Lutheran Church." I think they can serve as guides for how we can think about the issues confronting us and the

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America this year, specifically actions that will be presented at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in August of 2009. I'd describe the first statement as "Where Do We Stand?" and the second as "Where Do We Go From Here?"

## Where do we stand?

Those issuing the declaration offer six points as to the malaise affecting churchgoers today:

1. They affirm that the Holy Scriptures are the unchangeable and imperishable Word of the Triune God, through which God speaks, God created and God judges. Thus, they declare that they refuse any understanding and use of Holy Scriptures that would make them a mere product of human inventions about God and subject to changing social circumstances.
2. They affirm, with Augustine and the early fathers of the Church, the authority of Christ and His word, regardless of whether that authority is endorsed by a majority or a minority. Thus they refuse any attitude that would let public opinion or majority decisions determine what is right and wrong or true and false in the church. "Decisions and resolutions of church bodies such as councils, synods, conventions, commissions and of hierarchs can never be binding for consciences if they are not in agreement with or contrary to the word of God. Such decisions divide and destroy church communion" p. 13.
3. They affirm that unity in one universal church body is not promised to us, whereas false prophets, separation, enmity and persecution are predicted. Christian life thus consists of constant repentance and continuous justifica-

tion through Word and Sacraments. Therefore, every kind of preaching, pastoral care and church government that neglects this struggle between sin and grace is to be refused.

4. They affirm that if the true God who created us is not honored, people inevitably fall under the powers of nature, such as the deification of sexuality. Thus they refuse those pastors and bishops who do not call the church to repentance and forgiveness, and instead call bad good and good bad.

5. They further affirm that the Church is called to be transformed through the Gospel purely preached, rather than conformed to the world. Thus they refuse an attitude that seeks acceptance of the masses by all means of attraction but without conversion and renewal. Assent and acceptance without such makes a nominal church without spiritual power, no longer serving as salt and light to the world.

6. Given all this, our task, as set out in 2 Tim. 4:1-5, is to "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching...do the work of an evangelist..." And we are brought to pray to God that He will preserve His flock on its earthly pilgrimage as Jesus promised in Matt. 16:18 "...on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

## Where do we go from here?

As we apply these affirmations and limitations on the power of the church, we should consider our calling. We are "to stand up and bear witness to the faith and the truth that has been given to us in the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions" of the Lutheran Church. This means it is our job to confront those who stray as well as to encourage leaders who are despairing or fearful.

"We are not to give up hope!" We can be

confident that God is at work among us, and God can use the Lutheran Church, in whatever shape God designs, as a blessing to the church as a whole.

"We are called to suffer for the sake of the Gospel." This might mean contempt, being ostracized, even excommunicated but we know God's promise of strength sufficient for the day.

We are called to engage in the spiritual disciplines that nurture and feed us: meditation, prayer, fasting, solitude, simplicity, submission, chastity and tithing. Centuries of Christians have received great encouragement and faith in terrible times and situations and we can pray for the same.

In this approach we have resources to uphold us: the Bible, the catechism, the hymnal. Further, we know that the Gospel comes to us through the Word and Sacrament and through fellowship with believers. We can seek such community, perhaps beyond the bounds of our congregation. We can use the financial resources God has given to each of us to generously support those institutions that spread the Gospel and refuse to support institutions that would bless sexual activities that go against the biblical witness and proclaim a gospel that does not call people to repentance and faith.

Finally, we are reminded that God has promised that the Church will be and will abide until the last day, even though structures and systems may change and even fall. "In the end, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father. Let us go forward then with courage, knowing that Faith, Hope and Love, abide, and that the disciplines of self-denial will only strengthen us for service in his name," p. 98.

I recommend this little volume as a clearly stated and carefully reasoned guide to living in or beside the Lutheran church of today, in all of its tumult and uncertainty.

*(Continues on page eight)*

# Canadian provincial superior court judge reinstates four expelled from their church

by Betsy Carlson, Network News editor

A Canadian superior court judge reinstated four persons to membership in their church, Faith Lutheran Church, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, in January because the pastor and church council did not follow the congregation's own bylaws in excluding them.

Judge Ian Meiklem of the provincial Supreme Court of British Columbia wrote in his ruling, "I have concluded that the Bylaws were not complied with."

He called the actions of the pastor and church council "serious non-compliances." Under a Canadian law, societies (including churches) must register with the government and must act according to their own bylaws.

The four who petitioned the court and three others also excluded each had received written notices in the fall of 2007 of their exclusions from the church and Sacraments for displaying "a conduct which is grossly unbecoming a member of the body of Christ" and of repeatedly speaking against leadership in Faith Lutheran as well as against elected leadership of both synodical and national churches.

Their main crime? Circulating a petition in May 2007 requesting a special congregational meeting.

The result was that their pastor berated these four and the three others—during what was to have been a Mother's Day service—for going behind her back and for requesting the special meeting.

The pastor then took a sick leave until

Aug. 1, 2007.

The purpose of the special congregational meeting was to discuss and vote on the resolutions that were to be debated at the forthcoming Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada's National Convention in June 2007, which included a secret ballot on the blessing of same-sex unions. From this discussion and ballot vote, the delegate would know of the congregation's wishes on the issues before the national convention.

The congregation voted against blessing same-sex unions and since the pastor was on leave, elected someone else as delegate. He said recently that he voted with his heart at the national convention, and was supported by a convention majority, which defeated the blessing of same-sex unions. Later, after reading his convention report to the congregation, this delegate also was included as one of those members excluded.

The petition for a special meeting resulted because the church council had not called such a special meeting as of April although the congregation had voted for such a meeting during its regular annual meeting in February 2007.

The pastor, Anita Desjardins, was to be their delegate and some church members had been concerned early in 2007 that she would vote for the blessing of same-sex unions.

After returning to the church, Desjardins announced at a Sunday service Aug. 12, 2007, that there were troublemakers in the

*(Continues on page nine)*

live in such tumult and keep our eyes and lives firmly fixed on Christ, our guiding star. ♦

*('Canadian...'* Continues from page eight)

church and they soon would be dealt with under Matthew 18:15-18, according to an affidavit the judge cited.

The pastor then set in motion meetings that led to the expulsions of the seven members of Faith Lutheran. The four who petitioned the court to overturn their expulsions reported they were not given adequate or exact notices as to reasons for some of the meetings nor were they allowed to appeal to the congregation.

Matthew 18:15-18 calls for an aggrieved person to meet singly with the other party to work things out. If that fails, the aggrieved is to take another person to meet with the other. If the matter still is not resolved, the aggrieved is encouraged to take the matter before the whole community.

Meiklem wrote in his findings that he agreed with the four excluded members who characterized Pastor Anita Desjardins as their accuser. The judge said the pastor in her own affidavit did "not bring that characterization" (as accuser) into doubt.

"I agree that her full participation in the setting up of the meetings and in the decision of the Council on September 6, 2007, is a breach of one of the basic principles of natural justice—that the accuser should not be the judge," wrote Meiklem.

He also noted the council delegated to a discipline committee the decision making in this case even though according to Faith Lutheran's bylaws it did not have the right to. He said letters of expulsion sent to the seven indicated that the council merely accepted a recommendation from the committee, but did not make its own decision.

The judge also wrote that the Sept. 6 meeting of the discipline committee, to which the seven were invited but didn't go, could not be considered a second step in the three-step process set out in Matthew 18:15-18 because one-on-one meetings had not occurred, which should have been the first step. One of the four court petitioners had scheduled an appointment to meet with the

pastor in late August, but she cancelled it.

Desjardins later maintained that her Mother's Day comments to the congregation represented the first step in the Matthew 18 process and that the discipline committee meeting Sept. 6 and the church council meeting the same evening were steps two and three.

The judge also ruled that the four involved in the court case were not provided a hearing before the church council prior to the imposition of exclusion although it was required by Faith's bylaws. He also ruled that two congregational meetings in October, called by Desjardins, did not constitute an appeal to the congregation on the merits of the accusations, even though attempts were made to characterize them as appeals.

Meiklem however, reminded the four court petitioners that the conflict may not have escalated if they had "been more transparent" and informed the pastor directly that they were seeking signatures to call the special congregational meeting.

In addition to quashing the exclusion of the four from Faith Lutheran and the Sacraments, the judge awarded them costs.

♦

**Matthew 18:15-18 calls for an aggrieved person to meet singly with the other party to work things out. If that fails, the aggrieved is to take another person to meet with the other. If the matter still is not resolved, the aggrieved is encouraged to take the matter before the whole community.**

*('Banff Commission...'* Continues from page seven)

Its words pull us back to the authority we have and can claim, the Word of God. It also provides encouragement for how to

*(In his own eyes...'* Continues from page three)

ground their understanding of human sexuality in creation, but in the doctrines of justification and the incarnation. In other words, sexuality falls primarily under God's right-handed governing through His Word as Gospel, not His left-handed governing through His Word as Law.

Apparently responses from ELCA members to the first draft didn't support the task force's claim. Their proposed social statement timidly admits that the Lutheran understanding of sexuality is grounded in creation. The task force concedes that, "Lutherans understand human sexuality, and ethics in general, to be part of God's rule in this world, in contrast to God's rule in the coming world through the Gospel." (HSGT, 295-6)

Nevertheless the task force majority discovered another Lutheran teaching that somehow had gone unseen – a curious understanding of "the bound conscience." The task force twice cites Martin Luther's response at the Diet of Worms, where "he declared himself **bound in conscience by the Word of God** and further stated, 'It is neither safe nor right to go against conscience.'" (RRMP, 384-410) [Emphasis added; see also footnote 26, HSGT, pp. 17-18.]

Luther's words are commonly known, but the task force put a new spin on them – "The task force understands the term 'bound conscience' to describe the situation of those who hold a particular position because they are convinced of it **by particular understandings of Scripture and tradition.**" [Emphasis added.]

It is quite a leap from being bound "by the Word of God" to being bound "by particular understandings of Scripture and tradition." Furthermore, the task force asserts, "The emphasis of 'conscience-bound' is not on declaring oneself to be conscience-bound. Rather, we are bound in love by the conscience of the other—that is, we recognize the conscience-bound nature of the convictions of others in the community of Christ."

Luther's understanding was that his conscience was bound by God's **external** Word, not by his **particular** understanding of God's Word. His declaration at the Diet of Worms was an appeal to make sure that he wasn't bound by his **particular understanding** of God's Word. Our particular understandings can be all over the map, and surely they can't all be true understandings of God's Word. If God's Word is not external, but instead is reduced to an internal word based on our "particular understandings of Scripture," then what's to say that we haven't all interpreted Scripture to serve our sinful inclinations? Or in other words, fashioned our own gods? [Emphasis added.]

So where does one draw the boundaries? According to the task force, the church can't when it comes to morality. Perhaps the most significant section in either document from the task force is footnote 26 in HSGT, pp. 17-18:

When the **clear word of God's saving action** by grace through faith is at stake, Christian conscience becomes as adamant as Paul, who opposed those who insisted upon circumcision. . . However, when the question is about morality or church practice, the Pauline and Lutheran witness is less adamant and believes we may be called to respect the bound conscience of the neighbor. That is, if salvation is not at stake in a particular question, Christians are free to give priority to the neighbor's well-being and will protect the conscience of the neighbor who may well view the same question in such a way as to affect faith itself. . . . This social statement draws upon this rich understanding of the role of conscience and calls upon this church, when in **disagreement concerning matters around which salvation is not at stake**, including human sexuality, to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), honor the conscience and seek the well-being of the neighbor. [Emphasis added.]

*(Continues on page eleven)*

*(In his own eyes...'* Continues from page ten)

Apparently the task force is saying that while God's Word is clear about salvation, it isn't necessarily clear about morality. Therefore, as the majority on the task force and some churchwide leaders are saying, disagreements about morality are not church dividing:

Thus, we recognize that this church's deliberations related to human sexuality do not threaten the center of our faith, but rather require our best moral discernment and practical wisdom in the worldly realm. We also understand that in this realm faithful people can and will come to different conclusions about what constitutes responsible action. (HSGT, 326)

Again, these are breathtaking assertions. How can those assertions be reconciled with Paul's words to the Corinthians?

*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor*

*adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:9-11)*

The position of the majority on the ELCA task force ultimately means that each individual decides what is moral and what is immoral. The task force has recommended that we do what the Israelites did in the time of the judges – "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25)

Both documents from the ELCA task force are worlds apart from the Scriptural witness and commandment to do "... what is right and good in the sight of the LORD . . ." (Deut 6:18). On that basis alone, both the proposed social statement and the rostering recommendations ought to be rejected by the ELCA churchwide assembly in August.



## 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](http://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.

### American Lutheran Church Kellogg, Idaho

*Position:* Youth Minister  
*Contact:* Pastor Michael Birnbaum at [Michael@islonline.org](mailto:Michael@islonline.org) or 208-786-7791.

### Faith Lutheran Church Haines City, Florida

*Position:* Part-time Pastor  
*Contact:* Church Council president, Dale Dierksheide, at [arndcilrd@hotmail.com](mailto:arndcilrd@hotmail.com) or 863-299-9452.

### St. Paul's Lutheran Church Atlantic, Iowa

*Position:* Associate Pastor  
*Contact:* Call Committee Chair, Clair Acker at [ccacker@iowatelecom.net](mailto:ccacker@iowatelecom.net) or Sr. Pastor Dennis Meyer at [pastordam@iowatelecom.net](mailto:pastordam@iowatelecom.net) or phone us at 712-249-2355.

### St. John's Lutheran Church Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

*Position:* Assistant Pastor  
*Contact:* Mr. David Yach, Call Committee Chairperson, at [david.yach@roqers.com](mailto:david.yach@roqers.com) or 519-747-1959.

### St. Luke's Lutheran Church Shelby, Montana

*Position:* Pastor  
*Contact:* David Madison, Call Committee Chair, at [big sandy49@hotmail.com](mailto:big sandy49@hotmail.com) or 823 Teton, Shelby, MT 59474 or 406- 434-2416.