

Pastor Anita Hill approved for admission to ELCA Roster

Rev. Anita Hill, St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran church, St. Paul, Minnesota, has been informed by the Candidacy Committee of the Saint Paul Area Synod that she will be received onto the clergy roster of the ELCA following the finalization of changes to the governing documents which control ordination and call for the ELCA.

The two documents, *Vision and Expectations (V&E)* and *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline (D&G)*, which were originally adopted 20 years ago, are expected to be officially changed at the April 2010 meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

In accordance with the fundamental policy change approved by the ELCA's churchwide assembly last summer, changes to those two documents are expected to finally remove the policy barriers to service on the roster in the ELCA by ministers in committed, lifelong, same-gender relationships.

In the months since last August's churchwide Assembly, discussions have continued in the Conference of Bishops and the various ELCA offices and divisions which have responsibility, about the procedures to implement change. One difficulty which is not yet entirely resolved is whether clergy who were ordained under "extraordinary" (*extra ordinem*) conditions should be "re-ordained" by the ELCA in order to be admitted to its clergy roster.

Pastor Hill was ordained on April 28, 2001, at such an extraordinary ceremony presided over by Rev. Paul Tidemann, then Pastor of St. Paul-Reformation, before an overflow crowd of parishioners and friends who gathered from across the United States to offer support and encouragement.

Present and participating in the rite of ordination including "laying on of hands" were Rev. Paul Egertson, then Bishop of the ELCA Southwest California Synod; Rev. Dr. Krister Stendahl, Bishop Emeritus of Stockholm, Sweden and retired Academic Dean of the Harvard Divinity School; Rev. Lowell Ehrdahl, Bishop Emeritus of St. Paul Area Synod; and Rev. Stanley Olson, retired Bishop of the Pacific Southwest Synod (Lutheran Church in America).

The ordination was an act of the congregation gathered, under a provision in the Lutheran Confessions that allows congregations to ordain when bishops can't or won't. Nine years ago, the call and ordination of Pastor Hill were considered acts of "ecclesiastical disobedience" and the subject of a documentary film, "This Obedience," which is available through LC/NA.

The impact of Hill's call and ordination has rippled down through the years since 2001. St. Paul-Reformation was censured and sanctioned for its action of calling a pastor not on the ELCA roster. The sanctions were later lifted, but the censure remains in place to date.

For his participation in Hill's ordination, Egertson subsequently submitted his resignation from the leadership of the Southwest California Synod rather than face some form of censure by the Conference of Bishops. But in August of that year, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly authorized a study of ordination and service by clergy who are in committed, covenanted same-gender relationships.

The extended study process resulted in the elimination of the policies that forbade such service, by action of the ELCA's Churchwide Assembly eight years later, in August 2009. At that