



the GAY LUTHERAN

July-August, 1974

Published in Minneapolis, Minn.

No. 1

Official organ of LUTHERANS CONCERNED for GAY PEOPLE, Box 15592, Salt Lake City, Utah 84115

We confront church

A national Lutheran gay caucus, called LUTHERANS CONCERNED for GAY PEOPLE, was organized in Minneapolis June 17 to work within the church to end its condemnation and oppression of gay people.

"Our church has misled, misunderstood, confused, alienated and unjustly condemned us," the group said in a statement. But the group said it will not leave the church.

"Some of us have rejoiced to find through the ministry of Lutheran churches that we are included among those whom Jesus Christ has redeemed," the statement said. "We ask our church to receive and welcome us as it receives and welcomes others."

LUTHERANS CONCERNED, which includes current or former choir members, deacons, Sunday School teachers and Lutheran pastors, has ties with members of all three major Lutheran denominations.

The June 17 meeting was arranged with the help of a \$2,000 cash grant from the ALC's Division for Service and Mission in America, whose staff has been regularly helpful in working for an honest understanding of gay people. The money was used for travel, postage and duplicating expenses.

LUTHERANS CONCERNED agreed to become a rallying point for gay clergy and lay people, to provide a visible gay identity the church can no longer ignore. It authorized a regular newsletter to be published in Minneapolis, and sent out 25 press releases to daily newspapers, TV stations, and the church and gay press.

Birth of the group makes Lutherandom the 10th American faith to find a gay caucus of its members, following Dignity, the Roman Catholic group; and similar caucuses in the United Presbyterian, United Methodist, Episcopalian, American Baptist, Quaker, United Church of Christ, Unitarian-Universalist and Disciples of Christ churches.

The LCA's 1970 position on gay people is ostensibly sympathetic, but LCA President Robert J. Marshall later was quoted as saying the LCA could not ordain a gay

minister because the LCA considers homosexuality "a departure from God's heterosexual order."

The Missouri Synod was asked in 1973 to affirm the validity of the gay lifestyle, but the synod's New Orleans convention branded "homophile behavior" as sinful and said it would minister only to repentent sinners.

The ALC has taken no position since 1966, when it passed judgment on same-sex affections that was simultaneously medical ("...can be treated and sometimes cured"), theological ("...contrary to God's will") and moral ("warped").

How we'll do it

The structure of LUTHERANS CONCERNED, as contained in the constitution adopted June 17, is the essence of simplicity and flexibility.

A Steering Committee of five was elected--Diane Fraser and Allen Blaich, the coordinators; a Twin Cities Lesbian and gay man, and a New Yorker. The Steering Committee can enlarge itself and appoint new coordinators at any time.

But the bulk of the work of LUTHERANS CONCERNED is expected to be done by various task forces, caucuses, subgroups and committees which the Steering Committee, or the members themselves acting on their own initiative, may form at any time.

The subgroups can be set up along geographic, denominational or task/project lines--the Lesbian Lutheran Caucus of the Bay Area, for example, or the Theology Task Force of Lutherans Concerned.

These committees can be organized by groups of friends on their own, or by recruiting interested members of LUTHERANS CONCERNED. One way is through the HELP WANTED column in this newsletter. Another way is by drafting a separate notice or letter which we can include with the newsletter--to all North Dakota members, for example, or to all Missouri Lutheran subscribers in Milwaukee. Just send us the draft and we'll duplicate it and send it out. Because our mailing list is confidential, it's up to individual members to respond on their own.

Needed: Members

LUTHERANS CONCERNED needs members, and that means you and your friends, gay or intelligent non-gay.

We need members who will keep informed and support us with their prayers, even if they cannot become active.

We need members who can provide substantial financial support, gifts of \$10 or \$100 or more to cover mailing and duplicating costs, long-distance telephone bills, travel expenses so that a gay identity can be visible at every major Lutheran convention and conference.

But most of all, we need active members, who will take the initiative in organizing task forces and committees to do the work of justice and humanity that cries out to be done.

A well-grounded, compassionate theological stance needs to be articulated. Who will write it?

Our seminary students and pastors need to meet real, in-the-flesh gay women and men, to dispel stereotypes and prepare them to counsel and teach about gay people intelligently. Who will call on them?

And that doesn't begin to list the work that needs doing so that our church can begin to teach and act towards gay people in a way that is consistent with a gospel of love, joy and reconciliation for all human beings.

We need members. We need you. (H.E.)

HELP WANTED

This regular feature of The GAY LUTHERAN will bring together Lutherans who want to form committees and task forces, national or local, to do the work that needs to be done--confronting the church, visiting seminaries, etc.

Items should be addressed to Newsletter Editor, Box 15592, Salt Lake City, Utah 84115. Items should describe the nature of the group (national, local) and purpose, and list an address.

We have one volunteer item already:

ALC CAUCUS: ALC lay and clergy uniting nationally, especially in Detroit area, to approach ALC officials and educate them; to staff a display booth at ALC convention in Detroit in October, and to raise funds to send LUTHERANS CONCERNED members to the convention. Write ALC Caucus, Box 3589, Upper Nicollet Station, Minneapolis, MN 55403.

Our leaders

Elected coordinators (leaders) of LUTHERANS CONCERNED at the June 17 meeting were a Minnesota Lesbian and a Salt Lake City gay man.

Diane Fraser, 31, is an LCA member who is an instructor in sociology at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn. The holder of a master's degree from Duke University, she lives with her lover on a farm at Route 1, Kasota, Minn. 56050.

Allen Lee Blaich, 23, is an ALC member who is a senior majoring in theater at the University of Utah. For the past two years he has headed the Committee on Homosexuality of the Lutheran Student Movement, and he is on LSM's national council. In addition, he attends the all-gay Metropolitan Community Church in Salt Lake. A Mandan, N.D., native, he formerly studied at the University of North Dakota. He will be answering the LUTHERANS CONCERNED mail.

news notes

BOULDER--The Lutheran congregation of the University of Colorado endorsed a gay rights discrimination bill in that city and members rang doorbells to campaign for it. Two Lutheran campus pastors testified for it at a public hearing. The measure was rejected by voters in a May 7 referendum by a 2-to-1 margin after heated and angry public debate.

HOUSTON--The United Church of Christ executive committee declared that being gay is no bar to becoming a minister, and asked its conferences to ordain gay candidates. The Rev. Bill Johnson, San Francisco, is the first up-front gay the United Church has ordained (1972).

Subscribe! Join!

To: Lutherans Concerned
Box 15592
Salt Lake City, Utah 84115

Enter my subscription; I enclose \$3.
Count me also as a member.
To further your work, here Please check
is my donation of \$10 _____ ALC
\$25 _____ More _____ LCA
_____ Missouri
Make checks payable to _____ Clergy
LUTHERANS CONCERNED _____ Non-Luth.

Name _____
Address _____
Zip _____

Our mailing list is strictly confidential