



LUTHERAN LESBIAN & GAY MINISTRIES

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**CONTACT: Greg A. Egertson, Co-Chair**

(415) 722-4224 (cell) email: [gegertson@ggu.edu](mailto:gegertson@ggu.edu)

**CENTRAL CITY LUTHERAN MISSION EXPELLED for CALLING a LESBIAN PASTOR**

**The first time the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has removed a congregation for calling a sexual minority pastor since 1990**

Central City Lutheran Mission (CCLM) in San Bernardino, California, has lost its “congregation in development” status with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) for calling an openly lesbian pastor in violation of church policy.

The action by Bishop Murray Finck and the Pacifica Synod Council came in response to CCLM’s decision earlier this year to call the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Mason as associate pastor. Pastor Mason is a former missionary pastor who served 10 years with the ELCA’s Division for Global Mission in Chile. She was removed from her post and from the ELCA clergy roster in 2001 when church officials in Chicago learned she was a lesbian living in a committed same-gender relationship.

Current ELCA policy requires openly gay and lesbian clergy to remain celibate.

Pastor Mason was re-certified for Lutheran ministry in 2003 by the Extraordinary Candidacy Project (ECP), an independent Lutheran credentialing body that works with sexual minority clergy who do not wish to hide their sexual orientation and who have refused to comply with the ELCA’s celibacy rule.

**Pastor Mason is Uniquely Qualified**

The Pacifica Synod Council and Bishop Finck met with the Rev. David Kalke, CCLM Executive Director, and the CCLM Board of Directors on October 29, asking them to rescind their call to Pastor Mason. The CCLM Board refused, citing Pastor Mason’s outstanding qualifications as a Spanish-speaking pastor with a background in health education, skills that are very much needed in the multicultural inner-city neighborhood served by CCLM. In addition to providing clothing, shelter, meals, job training and

health education, the Mission recently dedicated two new buildings. One is a full-service health clinic staffed by volunteer nurses and nursing students from local colleges and universities. The Eucharist is celebrated eight times a week in both English and Spanish. The neighborhood youth have created a Hip Hop mass that is conducted weekly. Pastor Mason provides pastoral leadership and community outreach for all of these activities.

**Discipline Decision Announced on October 29**

In a letter to congregations and clergy of the Pacifica Synod, Bishop Finck placed responsibility for his actions on the CCLM Board and Pastor Kalke for defying church policy. Quoting the ELCA constitution, Bishop Finck stated that “congregations agree to call pastoral leadership from the clergy roster of this church in accordance with the call procedures of this church except in special circumstances and with the approval of the synodical bishop.” The adopted resolution goes on to say:

“BE IT RESOLVED, that the Pacifica Synod Council regretfully and sadly removes Central City Mission (Congregational Identification Number 30357) from the congregational roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, effective on October 29, 2004,” and be it further

RESOLVED that the Pacifica Synod Council recognizes this decision will end its call to the Rev. David Kalke as pastor/developer of the Central City Lutheran Mission in accordance with ELCA constitutional provision 7.43.01.”

### **Punishment is Most Severe Since 1990**

This action represents the first time a congregation has been removed from ELCA membership for calling an ECP pastor since 1990, when St. Francis and First United Lutheran Churches in San Francisco were suspended and later expelled for calling the Rev. Jeff Johnson, the Rev. Ruth Frost and the Rev. Phyllis Zillhart as pastors. Of the 14 ELCA congregations currently being served by ECP pastors nationwide, not one has been disciplined beyond receiving a letter of censure.

Most recently, letters of censure were issued against two other ELCA congregations for hiring openly gay pastors approved by the Extraordinary Candidacy Project:

- In September 2004, the Minneapolis Area Synod and Bishop Craig Johnson issued a letter of public censure and admonition to Bethany Lutheran Church for installing the Rev. Jay Alan Wiesner as associate pastor.
- In October 2004, the Southwest California Synod and Bishop Dean Nelson issued a letter of public censure to Hollywood Lutheran Church for calling the Rev. Daniel M. Hooper as pastor.

In sharp contrast to the Pacifica Synod’s actions against Central City Lutheran Mission, these bishops chose the least punitive option allowed under the ELCA constitution.

### **CCLM Allowed to Continue Social Services but not as “Church”**

For several years CCLM has enjoyed a unique status within the ELCA as both a social ministry organization approved by the Division for Church and Society, and as a “congregation in development” through the Division for Outreach. The dual identity has enabled CCLM to attract funds from a variety of public, private and faith-based sources. It also placed CCLM on the cutting edge of ELCA urban ministry efforts. According to Pastor Kalke, combining worship and sacramental ministry with the delivery of social services “allows the poor to be subjects in a process for personal and social transformation” rather than mere “objects of charity.”

Not only has this approach been effective, it was universally held up as a model within the ELCA until CCLM called an openly lesbian woman to provide pastoral leadership.

“We are completely confounded by the severity of the Pacifica Synod’s action,” said Greg Egertson, Co-Chair of Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries (LLGM). “By taking away the Mission’s congregational identity and vacating Pastor Kalke’s call, the ELCA has done irreparable and unnecessary harm to the CCLM community. Yes, the people in the neighborhood may still receive food, clothing and other social services... but where are they

supposed to go for worship, prayer and to receive the sacraments? Aren't these the heart of what it means to be people of faith? Didn't Jesus teach us that 'we do not live by bread alone'? The ELCA has clearly forgotten its mission-al purpose. They have become so focused on the criteria for recognizing churches that they have lost sight of what it means to be one."

### **Pacifica Synod Meets Again on December 4**

CCLM board members remain steadfast in their decision to support Pastors Kalke and Mason. At the same time, they greatly value their congregational identity and affiliation with the ELCA. The CCLM Board has officially asked Bishop Finck and the Pacifica Synod Council to rescind the October 29 decision and adopt the more moderate response taken by other synods throughout the ELCA.

The Pacifica Synod Council meets again this Saturday, December 4.

Central City Lutheran Mission is a 2004 mission partner of Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries. So far this year, LLGM has provided over \$35,000 in grants to CCLM to support the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Jenny Mason and restore the significant financial losses that CCLM has suffered by standing in solidarity with openly gay and lesbian clergy. We have called upon all of our members and friends to contact the Pacifica Synod Council and urge them to rescind their discipline decision when they meet on December 4.

**Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries (LLGM)** was founded in 1989 in response to the ELCA's refusal to allow openly gay and lesbian pastors to serve in the church. The 1990 ordinations of seminary graduates Jeff Johnson, Ruth Frost and Phyllis Zillhart in San Francisco, drew national media attention and began a nationwide movement to provide legal, pastoral and financial support to gay and lesbian pastors who were threatened with discipline, dismissed from their positions or removed from the ELCA clergy roster.

Over the years, LLGM has provided support to dozens of clergy who find themselves caught in a bind between being honest about their sexual orientation and losing their jobs. LLGM also provides financial and legal assistance to those congregations who support their pastor and risk loss of members and discipline from ELCA bishops.

For more information on Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries see their web site:  
[www.llgm.org](http://www.llgm.org)

**The Extraordinary Candidacy Project (ECP)** was founded in 1993 as a project of Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries and other advocacy groups to certify the credentials of openly identified sexual minority pastors and seminarians who no longer wish to keep their sexual orientation a secret from their congregations and ELCA church officials.

Nationally, there are nearly 40 pastors and seminarians on the ECP roster and the list is growing. Pastors and seminarians who apply to the ECP for certification must meet the same rigorous standards as those who apply for certification from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), except gay and lesbian pastors are not expected to remain celibate as the ELCA requires. The committees that certify ECP candidates are made up of ELCA seminary professors, retired bishops, pastors and lay leaders from various professions. The ECP is not formally affiliated with the ELCA.

For more information on the ECP see their web site:  
[www.extraordinarycandidacyproject.org](http://www.extraordinarycandidacyproject.org)

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### **Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries**

Greg A. Egertson, Co-Chair  
(415) 722-4224 (cell)  
[gegertson@ggu.edu](mailto:gegertson@ggu.edu)

### **Extraordinary Candidacy Project**

The Rev. Jeff R. Johnson, President  
(510) 757-3652 (cell)  
[jrobertj@earthlink.net](mailto:jrobertj@earthlink.net)

### ***Central City Lutheran Mission – ELCA***

1354 North ‘G’ Street  
San Bernardino, CA 92405

### ***Pacifica Synod – ELCA***

The Rev. Murray Finck, Bishop  
(714) 692-2791

The Rev. David Kalke  
The Rev. Jennifer Mason  
(909) 381-6921

### ***Bethany Lutheran Church – ELCA***

2511 East Franklin Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55406

### ***Minneapolis Area Synod - ELCA***

The Rev. Craig Johnson, Bishop  
(612) 870-3610

The Rev. Steven Benson  
The Rev. Jay Alan Wiesner  
(612) 332-2397

### ***Hollywood Lutheran Church – ELCA***

1733 North New Hampshire Avenue  
Hollywood, CA 90027

### ***Southwest California Synod – ELCA***

The Rev. Dean W. Nelson, Bishop  
(818) 507-9591

The Rev. Daniel M. Hooper  
(323) 666-0146

