

Standing on Solid Ground


Rosalynn Tubbe

Equipping the Saints for God's Mission

April 26, 2007

Good Evening. It is wonderful to be in Alberta again. Aside from the pleasure of spending time out here with people I dearly love, I love to visit the mountains. Their sheer, rugged beauty is breathtaking. Outside of geological interest, what is it that people see in them? Perhaps it is that they are solid, a symbol of security. When I was young, an insurance company that sponsored an historical interpretative T.V. Show used a rock as its logo. Their claim was that we could put our trust in them because they were built on a solid foundation. I think we view rocks as symbols of security, firm and reliable because the Scriptures sometimes refer to God as our Rock. King David did in 2 Samuel and Psalm 18 and 19. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus tells a parable of the wise and foolish man; and in the words of the children's chorus, based on that parable, we sing, "and the house on the rock stood firm". St. Paul, in 1st Corinthians refers to Christ as our spiritual Rock. A favourite Youth song assures us, "Jesus is the Rock of my Salvation." The chorus of one of my favourite hymns resounds, "On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand". The ground upon which we construct physical buildings needs to be rock-solid. Likewise, the Scriptures speak of building our spiritual structure on Solid Ground. As Christians, our Solid Ground is Christ Jesus. Martin Luther called the Scriptures the manger in which the Christ is laid.

In the Scriptures, we see God's character, design and purpose. Through God-given faith, God also reveals ourselves to us. The Holy Spirit shows us our sinful nature, its ultimate fate and the blessed solution God has provided in the death and resurrection of His only begotten Son, Jesus. So, the Scriptures also become for us a solid ground on which to construct our spiritual growth. Seeking strength for our faith and guidance for our living, we study the Scriptures. It is for these reasons that the name Solid Ground was adopted a few years ago by a group of clergy and laity within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, as a network was formed.

 "Solid Ground" – Whither?

Solid Ground is more than just "Eastern Synod clergy and lay people." Solid Ground incorporates fellow brothers and sisters across Canada who also share in this conviction and passion.

From "Solid Ground - A Brief History" at: <http://www.solid-ground.ca/history.htm>

Prior to the synod conventions of 2002, a movement was stirring within the ELCIC, under the guidance of Lutherans Concerned/North America. Its objective was to affirm non-celibate homosexuals for the purpose of acceptance to ordained ministry and blessing of same-sex unions.

From the gathering of a small group of Alberta clergy a ministry approach was developed to welcome homosexuals with the purpose of providing

healing and transformational ministry to those individuals who were troubled or seeking to change. Communities of Grace, as this alternative was known, was intended as a counterpart to a Lutherans Concerned designation called Reconciling in Christ that affirmed non-celibate homosexuality.



Communities of Grace

... And Jesus said "Neither do I condemn you; Go, and do not sin again"

[What is the "Communities of Grace" commitment?](#)

[All people are welcome here. Why should we single out anyone?](#)

[How do we become a Community of Grace?](#)

[What will happen if we adopt this statement?](#)

[The Communities of Grace Commitment](#)

At the same time, a few clergy in the Eastern Synod had begun meeting to discuss concerns about the present spiritual conditions of the ELCIC.

Solid Ground History

- In 2002, upon return from the Eastern Synod Convention in Ottawa, a few Eastern Synod clergy (Harry Huff, Doug Kranz, Steve Alles, David Wunderlich) met to discuss concerns about the present spiritual condition of the ELCIC.
- Joined by other clergy (Greg Kjos, Peter Hincke, Harry Vibe, Barry Lang, David Tin, Ana Beck, Peeter Vanker) as well as some laity (Rosalynn Tubbe), an umbrella group for those sharing a common concern about present trends and movements within the Church was formed – “Solid Ground”.

Of the names shown here, only Rev. Harry Huff and Rev. David Wunderlich of the original group are still in the ELCIC. And of the additional clergy who gathered early on, Ana Beck and Harry Vibe have since left the ELCIC also.

Then, at Eastern Synod Convention in 2002, motions were brought forward to adopt an “Affirmation of Welcome statement” to homosexuals, and to study the possibility and implications of blessing same-sex unions. This was to be done in preparation for the next Synod convention, at which we would vote on becoming a Reconciling in Christ synod.

Solid Ground History

- An initial concern for Solid Ground was a resolution coming out of the 2002 Eastern Synod Convention asking the Eastern Synod at its 2004 Convention to adopt an “Affirmation of Welcome” which would lead to the synod becoming a Lutherans Concerned ‘Reconciling in Christ’ (RIC) synod.

At that point in time, a number more clergy and a few laity began to meet on a regular basis to try to find ways to communicate to the members of the Eastern Synod what the Bible and our Lutheran Confessions had to say regarding this matter. We soon found that synod doors were closed to us. If we wanted to let others who shared our beliefs on this matter know they had support, we would have to find our own methods and media to communicate with them.

A major function for Solid Ground is to INFORM.
However, for people to be informed they have to be AWARE of our existence.

We began by holding an event in Toronto to which we invited a clergyman from the ELCA and one of the pastors responsible for creating the Communities of Grace. Already on that occasion, we found Bishop Pryce of our Eastern Synod opposed to what we were doing.

From that point on, communications increased between our little group in the east and the small element here in the west. Our structure in the east took the name Solid Ground, feeling that all those whose hope of salvation is founded in Christ Jesus will desire that our beliefs and decisions be established on solid ground. That solid ground, we believe, is found in the traditionally understood teachings of the Scriptures, whose interpretation, presented in the Lutheran

Confessions is faithful to the Holy Spirit's intent. We believe, as did Martin Luther, that Scripture interprets Scripture or that it explains and support its own meaning. Scriptures are our final authority in all matters of doctrine.

Solid Ground, for those who are seeking:

- Information about what is happening in our church and resources to respond to the issues of our time.
- The fellowship and support of like-minded Lutherans who share their concern (“you’re not alone”).
- A theological and spiritual rallying point for historic Lutheran orthodoxy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC).
- A voice that calls upon the ELCIC to remain faithful to the Word of God according to the Lutheran Confessions.
- A way forward together in response to unprecedented changes in our church.





In the spring of 2004, Solid Ground offered a sexuality conference in the East. Here in the west, the “What’s At Stake?” Conference was held in January 2005.

We created a brochure to inform members of our existence and purpose and revamped our original web site to enable us to reach more people with our information and concerns.



Our web master has done a tremendous job of keeping that site updated and our visitors well informed. Business cards were printed for distribution so people could contact the web site.

Who Are We? Solid Ground is a network of Lutheran clergy and laity within the ELCIC concerned about present trends and movements within the Church, particularly around the issues of Scriptural authority and human sexuality.

Solid Ground

- For those who are seeking information about what is happening in our church and resources to respond to the issues of our time.
- For those who are seeking the fellowship and support of like-minded Lutherans who share their concern.
- For those who are seeking a theological and spiritual rallying point for historic Christian orthodoxy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.
- For those who are seeking a voice that calls upon the ELCIC to remain faithful to the Word of God according to the Lutheran Confessions.
- For those who are seeking to find a way forward together in response to unprecedented changes in our church.

www.solid-ground.ca

A poster was designed to tell what we were about.

In spite of this, at Eastern Synod Convention 2004, a welcome motion was passed. It was not, however, the one approved by the delegates in 2002. That motion's association with Lutherans Concerned/North America, in the words of one Eastern Synod clergy activist, was "a stumbling block" to its acceptance. The new "welcoming" motion that finally gained approval was drafted and submitted by the Synod Council. Right on its

heels, the delegates approved petitioning the National Church Council to study and make recommendations to the Convention in 2005 regarding the blessing of same-sex unions and also to study the implications of ordination of non-celibate homosexuals. Shortly after the "welcoming" motion was passed, Lutherans Concerned/North America unilaterally declared the Eastern Synod an RIC Synod, the first in the ELCIC. Today, it appears that BC is following along the same path.

Motions Passed at 2004 Eastern Synod Convention

- **'Welcome' Statement:**
That, within the context of our church's constitutions and enactments, the Eastern Synod affirm the principle that all persons are welcome to full participation in the organizational and sacramental life of this church regardless of race, ancestry, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, age, record of offences, marital status, sexual orientation, economic status, family status, or disability. Yes: 283; No: 79
- **Petition to NCC to "study" local option for same-sex blessings**
That the Eastern Synod petition the ELCIC National Church Council to initiate a study of the theological, ecclesiological, and pastoral implications of authorizing a parish based local option to perform same-sex blessings and bring appropriate recommendations to the 2005 ELCIC National Convention. Yes: 247; No: 90
- **Petition to NCC to "study" ordination of non-celibate homosexuals** That the Eastern Synod petition the ELCIC National Church Council to initiate a study of the theological, ecclesiological, and pastoral implications of authorizing the ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament of qualified, openly lesbian and gay persons, including those in committed relationships, and to bring appropriate recommendations to the 2007 ELCIC National Convention.

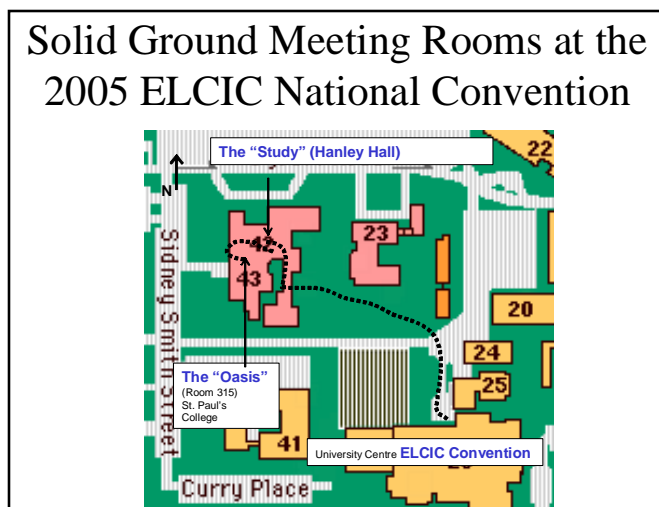
We became increasingly aware that many people did not know what was happening. Some who did know, did not fully understand the issues and their implications.



Before National Convention in 2005, a group of individuals in Alberta began a nationwide campaign they called *Taking A Stand*. Their purpose, to unite concerned member's voices through a petition submitted to the National Synod.

That caused a bit of a stir, raising accusations of foul play; though no evidence ever was produced. At that Convention, as a result of two rooms that Solid Ground rented as hospitality and information suites, we were able to build many new relationships and

make more connection between east and west.



- By Rev. Brad Everett

Other brochures in the series:

WWJD?
- Rev. Brad Everett
Nazareth, Standard, AB

Divorce and Remarriage: A Good Analogy?
To Bless or Not to Bless? Natural Homosexuality?
- Rev. Phil Gagnon
St. Albert, St. Albert, AB

Two Tired Christians? Is Everyone Welcome or Not?
What Makes Pastoral Care Pastoral?
- Rev. Karl Johnsen
Sharon, Calgary, AB

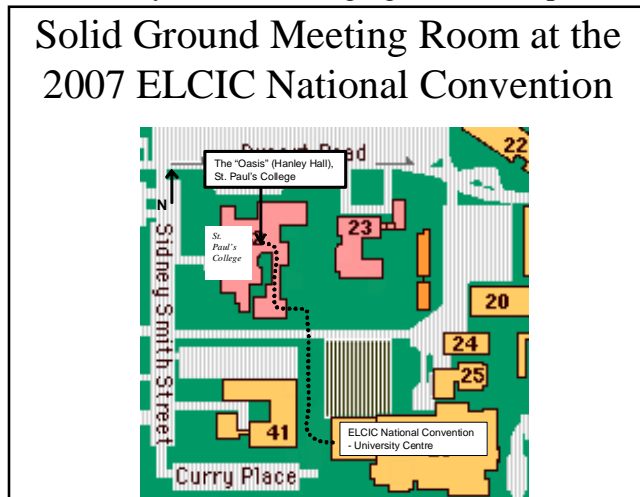
For that occasion several individuals, lay and clergy, developed broadsides (see above) addressing the biblical perspective on different aspects of both the homosexuality and Scriptural issues which we were able to distribute for people's education.

On the last evening of Convention 2005, we were able to gather well over a hundred delegates together for a meeting to seek a common vision forward. It was agreed that a steering committee be formed and an executive committee be elected. The network had to become more deliberate, organized and united in its activities. Three of the individuals (two of whom were pastors) that formed the 2005 steering committee have since departed from this church body.

- Solid Ground Executive Formed** (November 2005)
- President - Rev. Ed Skutshek
(Grace, Kelowna, B.C.)
 - Chair – Rev. Peeter Vanker
(Retired, Markham, Ontario)
 - Vice-Chair – Rosalynn Tubbe
(St. John's, Waterloo, Ontario)
 - Treasurer – John Schoenhals
(St. John's, Waterloo, Ontario)
 - Secretary – Vacant

After that Convention, *Taking A Stand* amalgamated with Solid Ground in the hope of increasing our voice in the church.

When the Eastern Synod gathered in July 2006, delegates were encouraged to vote to implement the local option for blessing same-sex unions in eastern Canada. The National Church Council, even though they ruled this action unconstitutional, did nothing to reprimand the Eastern Synod. In fact, they are now bringing the local option motion back to the Convention floor this June.



Only this time, it is to allow **synods** to exercise the option to bless same-sex unions. Solid Ground will continue to try to educate those who will listen to the dangers and negative impact of the local option. You can do your part by talking with your delegate so they understand the inherent dangers of supporting this motion. Solid Ground will again have a suite at the Convention. We invite delegates and visitors who are looking for like-minded support, a refuge from the stress or seeking information to visit our room in nearby St. Paul's College.

Over the course of the last five years, Solid Ground has envisioned our Mission to be **to call the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada to remain faithful to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions in accordance with our church constitutions. As members of the ELCIC, we are concerned about the departure from its traditional confessional position, particularly on matters of God's design for human sexuality. To this end, we endeavor to inform, educate and support fellow members.**

Who are the people who make up Solid Ground? Did you picture yourself anywhere in the description I just recounted? If you are concerned about what is happening within the ELCIC and believe you have a role or a need in informing, educating or supporting fellow members, then, you are a part of who Solid Ground is.

*If you do not stand firm in your faith,
you will not stand at all.*

Isaiah 7:9