

Victims Of Visions and Expectations: Essays by Pastors Expelled from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Essay Number One
Pastor Paul Johnson
Edited by Lars Clausen

- Today, in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Pastor Bradley Schmeling is on trial for pastoring while gay. If convicted, he will be removed from the ELCA roster of pastors.
- Fifteen years ago Pastor Paul Johnson was serving as assistant to the bishop of the LaCrosse Area Synod. When he was outed as a gay man he was expelled from his position as an ELCA pastor.

To help Pastor Bradly Schmeling and to help end the ELCA's injustice, Pastor Paul Johnson is today sharing his story with churches and church members across our country. Please pass it on.

Paul Johnson knew already as an eighth grader that he was called to be a minister. In his story, Paul provides details of his arduous journey toward accepting his sexual identity, including self-denial, marriage to his wife, closeted questions, suicidal thoughts, expulsion from the ELCA, finding his partner David, and leaving the Lutheran church. On the thirtieth anniversary of Paul's ordination, 11 years after being forced to resign, Paul wrote.



I am sad that church leaders mostly see this as a problem for gay and lesbian people. It is really the church's problem. Anytime the church alienates and excludes a large number of people it has a very big problem. I am sad that the church hasn't yet recognized that.

I am glad for the people in groups like the Extraordinary Candidacy Committee who look for calls for gay and lesbian people and boldly challenge the church. And sometimes I am sad that I don't have the energy to fight in that way for my call.

Thirty years ago today I was ordained as a Lutheran pastor. The church has said "no" to my ordination, but God has not. And I still think of myself as a Lutheran pastor. But there will be no celebration today, and I am very sad!

Read Pastor Paul Johnson's story. (Available online and as PDF download)
www.straightintogayamerica.com/visionsandexpectations

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Thank you for sharing this story with others.