

From: Russell L. Sommerfeld  
Sent: Fri 10/3/2008 6:20 PM  
Subject: Wheat Ridge Ministries Symposium Workshop

Dear COP Colleagues,

I have been given the opportunity and privilege to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of Wheat Ridge Ministries. I am writing to you after consultation with LCMS President Jerry Kieschnick and Wheat Ridge President and CEO Richard Herman.

Some of you have received inquiries concerning a speaker at the October 2-4, 2008 Wheat Ridge "Living Well" Symposium. On September 30, Mr. Dan Ford who is a member of LCMS congregation St. John Lutheran Church in Wheaton, Illinois, released an e-mail to rostered ordained and commissioned ministers of the LCMS. In this e-mail he offered opinions and conclusions about the leader of a workshop being presented at the Wheat Ridge "Living Well" Symposium in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The workshop is titled "The Church and Race: Our Brokenness Examined."

This workshop was originally listed in the registration materials for the Symposium as being led by ELCA pastor Rev. Chuck Ruehle who is Executive Director of Crossroads Anti-Racism and Training of Matteson, Illinois and Ms. Anne Stewart who is a trainer for the same organization. Mr. Ford offered his opinions and conclusions about Rev. Ruehle who serves on the Board of Directors of "The Lutheran Network for Inclusive Vision." This organization reports on its WEB page that it supports committed same sex relationships among ELCA clergy and advocates that they not be removed from the active ministry roster of the ELCA. You received an e-mail from President Kieschnick in regard to Mr. Ford's e-mail. President Kieschnick stated once again the clear biblical position of the LCMS that homosexual behavior is intrinsically sinful.

Please note that the workshop at the Wheat Ridge Symposium was on anti-racism, not homosexuality. Since the printing of the Wheat Ridge registration materials, a change had to be made in the leaders of this workshop due to leader availability. The leader was not Rev. Chuck Ruehle, but his wife Rev. Susan Ruehle who is on the staff of the ELCA Synod in the Milwaukee area. She will be assisted by Rev. Jessica Vazquez. Both are trainers for the Crossroads anti-racism organization. They led the workshop based on their extensive experience with anti-racism. Susan Ruehle is well known in the ELCA and has provided training on anti-racism in at least one LCMS District.

Wheat Ridge Ministries was not aware of the connection of Rev. Chuck Ruehle with the group Lutheran Network for Inclusive Vision. I attended the workshop on anti-racism and there was no mention of the Lutheran Network for Inclusive Vision or its views. The workshop was well done on anti-racism and its impact on health.

Please also note that Mr. Ford never contacted Wheat Ridge Ministries for information or clarification prior to releasing his e-mail.

The Wheat Ridge Symposium continues through tomorrow at noon. It is providing helpful health ministry information and networking for the seeding of new ministries of health and hope in the Name of the healing Christ.