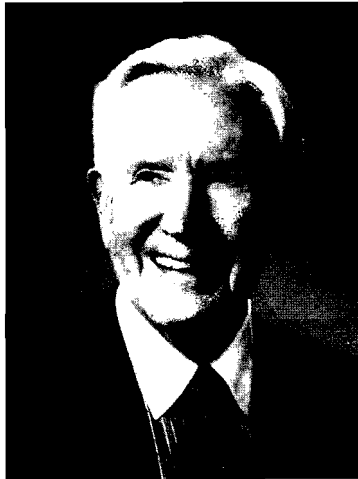# UNSUNG HERO
A Lutheran Who Makes a Difference

Merton Strommen Puts Kids First

Rev. Dr. Merton Strommen

Gay sex is often presented as an issue of adult equality. If heterosexual couples have the right to be married, then homosexual couples should have that right too. But marriage is not solely about adults. It's also about creating a safe and stable environment for children. Societies need children, and children need mothers and fathers – that is why the state and the church have a common interest in heterosexual marriage.

Who speaks up for kids today? Who speaks up for mom and dad families?

Mert Strommen! Though in his 80's, he speaks anywhere and everywhere. His plea: "We need to provide youth, especially young males, with healthy role models."

What's Best for Kids?

Strommen is a Lutheran pastor, a nationally known research psychologist, a "Fellow" in the American Psychological Association, founder of *The Search Institute*, and the author of *Five Cries of Youth* and other books. His life's work has been a study of what's best for kids. In response to the pro-gay momentum in the ELCA, he wrote a book offering sound, compassionate reasons for saying "No" to the gay agenda – for kids' sake. But *Augsburg Fortress* would not publish it.

When the ELCA Task Force on Homosexuality was formed, Strommen volunteered to serve. Few, if any, have his expertise and national connections with experts in the field of reorientation therapy. But ELCA leaders did not appoint him or any reorientation therapist to the Task Force. The dice were loaded and Strommen was out.

Early Prevention

When the church adopted a Pollyanna view of gay sex, Strommen warned about the dark side – the many diseases and high death rates even for those in long-term gay/lesbian relationships.

When the church insisted that GLBT persons were "born that way," Strommen showed that change is possible. He notes that the success rate for reorientation therapy is the same as for any kind of psychotherapy: one-third success, one-third improved, and one-third unsuccessful. That's why it's so important to reach kids!

What can be done for boys between the ages of 3 and 14 can save what is later difficult to overcome. As he writes, "Just a few months working with a boy who has homosexual tendencies or is a victim of gay abuse can produce results that would take years with an adult homosexual."

Let's Protect Kids

What about ordaining non-celibate gays and lesbians? What message does this send to kids? Strommen: "The pastor's unique position of power and influence has an unconscious shaping influence on an adolescent's life."

Strommen doesn't waffle or wink. With an eye on what's best for kids, he has opposed ordaining non-celibate homosexuals. No matter how "nice" they are, the behavior they model implicitly misleads kids about the dangers of gay sex.

And what positive steps could churches take today that would help "the walking wounded" of the sexual revolution who find nowhere to turn with their harmful sexual behaviors and desires?

Strommen offers many useful suggestions, among them this:

"The best research regarding the causes of homosexuality and the possibility of a change in orientation should be widely disseminated. Information on reorientation therapies should be available in our churches, and ex-gays should be allowed to tell their stories. The risks of a promiscuous homosexual lifestyle should be talked about openly."

Dr. Merton Strommen is a Christian leader of courage, conviction, and compassion. His strong arm of help for kids helps us all. If you want information on this issue, Dr. Strommen's book and DVD are available at Kirkhouse Publishing (pubisher@kirkhouse.com; 1-888-696-1828).

A Lutheran pastor whose teenage son was wavering in his sexuality found a good counselor referred by Mert Strommen. A year later the pastor reports that his son is resolving his inner confusion and developing into a fine young man. His son can look forward to a healthy, heterosexual future. One more rescued young man. Many more to go. Thank you, Mert.