

Congregational Declaration Regarding the Ministry Policy Actions

Approved at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly

Questions: Is there a way whereby our congregation could formally register its dissent from the ministry policy actions approved by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly? How might we indicate that our congregation is not open to calling a partnered gay or lesbian person to serve as our pastor?

Response: The congregation and/or the congregational council could consider and vote upon a resolution such as the following. Please consult with the bishop or a member of the synod staff regarding the best process to use in considering such a resolution, as well as the status this resolution will have in the congregation's life and ministry, e.g. a resolution by a congregational meeting, a continuing resolution, a bylaw, etc.

REGARDING MARRIAGE

1. We affirm that *“marriage and the family [are] foundational structures that support human community.”*
2. We affirm that *“marriage is a covenant of mutual promises, commitment, and hope authorized legally by the state and blessed by God.”*
3. We affirm *“marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman....”* (Mark 10:6-9; Genesis 1:27, 2:23-24).
4. We affirm that, *“despite its awareness of the presence of sin and failure in marriage, the Christian tradition places great emphasis on the value of marriage for a husband and wife.”*¹
5. Therefore,
 - we commend the institution of marriage to our members and friends;
 - we encourage child-bearing and adoption within the context of marriage;
 - we expect engaged couples to make use of the Means of Grace, pastoral care, counseling, prayer, and other ways of preparing themselves for marriage;
 - we beseech married couples encountering difficulties in their relationship to receive pastoral care and counseling to preserve their marriages;
 - we commit ourselves to strengthening marriages and families in our preaching, teaching and other faith formation activities; and
 - we understand that the home/family is a primary arena for Christian faith formation for our children.

¹ Statements printed in *bold italics* are from *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, a social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America adopted at its 2009 Churchwide Assembly, pp. 9-10.

REGARDING GAY AND LESBIAN PERSONS AND THEIR FAMILIES

1. We “*welcome, care for, and support*” gay and lesbian persons and their families who wish to participate in the life of our congregation.
2. We offer compassionate counsel and pastoral care to those who are same-gender in their orientation, as well as to those who “*seek counsel about their sexual self-understanding.*”
3. We oppose “*all forms of verbal or physical harassment and assault based on sexual orientation.*”²

REGARDING _____ LUTHERAN CHURCH’S RESPONSE TO THE ACTIONS OF THE 2009 ELCA CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

_____ Lutheran Church is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

_____ Lutheran Church declares that marriages, civil unions, or blessings of persons in same gender relationships will not be performed in this church building or authorized by this congregation.

_____ Lutheran Church, as a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, understands that it has the right to call, or refuse to call, as a pastor or rostered lay leader any person who is on the roster of ordained ministers or lay rosters or any candidate approved for those rosters.

_____ Lutheran Church, in accordance with the 2009 Churchwide Assembly which resolved that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America “make provision in its policies to recognize the conviction of members who believe that this church should not call or roster people in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship,” declares that this congregation will not call a pastor or lay rostered leader who is or intends to be in such a same-gender relationship.

² Statements printed in *bold italics* are from *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, a social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America adopted at its 2009 Churchwide Assembly, p 10.