

A MEMORIAL CONCERNING HUMAN SEXUALITY FROM THE LA CROSSE AREA SYNOD TO THE 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

WHEREAS, the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality has earnestly studied and struggled with these matters for eight years, and their work models and invites mutually respectful dialogue about sexuality throughout this church; and

WHEREAS, the proposed social statement seeks to powerfully proclaim a Lutheran understanding of trust, love and service to God and to the neighbor as the proper foundation of understanding sexuality; and

WHEREAS, even after many years of thoughtful, respectful, and faithful Bible study and conversation, there remains much variation in the ELCA as to how to regard same-gender committed relationships and the rostered ministry of people in them; and

WHEREAS, the Recommendation on Ministry Policies allows a means of maintaining a uniform standard and process for candidacy and call throughout this church while respecting the bound consciences of all; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Church Council, at its March 2009 meeting, voted by an overwhelming margin to transmit to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality, its implementing resolutions, and a Recommendation on Ministry Policies¹; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 Conference of Bishops stated, "We express trust in and will continue dialogue with those pastors and congregations who are in ministry with gay and lesbian persons, and affirm their desire to explore the best ways to provide pastoral care for all to whom they minister;" and

WHEREAS, in 1999 the Churchwide Assembly (this church's highest legislative authority) voted to reaffirm 1991 and 1995 actions of the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that "gay and lesbian people, as individuals created by God, are welcome to participate *fully* [italics added] in the life of the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;"² therefore be it

RESOLVED that the La Crosse Area Synod, meeting in Assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly as follows:

1. To adopt the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and its implementing resolutions, as recommended by the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality and transmitted by the ELCA Church Council.
2. To adopt the four resolutions (stated as "steps" in the attached addendum) of the proposed Recommendation on Ministry Policies ., as recommended by the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality and transmitted by the ELCA Church Council.

And be it further

RESOLVED that the La Crosse Area Synod thank the Task Force for its work and to continue to hold the members of the Churchwide Assembly in our prayers as they engage in moral deliberation.

Submitted by the Church Council of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, La Crosse, Wisconsin, the Rev. Dr. Mark E. Jolivet, and the Rev. Gary Wees.

¹ Addendum "Description of Task Force Recommendations"

² excerpt from CA99.06.27

II. Description of the Task Force Recommendations, excerpted from “Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies”, February 19, 2009, pp. 6-7

236 In the face of these differing conclusions, all of which are represented on the task force itself, the task
237 force was unable to come to unanimous agreement. Although the recommendation that follows represents
238 the consensus of most of the task force, it does not have the support of all. It is therefore presented
239 humbly, with a sense of burden for the sisters and brothers in Christ—both on the task force and in the
240 wider church—who are bound by their consciences to disagree.

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242 *The task force recommends a process that begins with the assembly declaring its intention about what it*
243 *wants to do.* The proposed process begins with decisions about *whether* this church wants to find a way to
244 recognize publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships; and *whether* this
245 church wants to move in the direction of rostering people living in such relationships. *If so*, then the
246 process leads to considering *how* this could be accomplished. The resolutions begin by seeking agreement
247 on the principles before they address the practice.

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249 *The recommendation thus consists of four resolutions, each of which takes a step in the decision-making*
250 *process.* The task force proposes to the assembly that the decisions be taken in four consecutive steps. If
251 the assembly agrees to the first, then the second, third, and fourth would be considered only if the
252 preceding one(s) had been approved.

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254 **Step one** asks the assembly whether, in principle, it is committed to finding ways to allow congregations
255 and synods that choose to do so to recognize, support, and hold publicly accountable lifelong,
256 monogamous, same-gender relationships.

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258 The work of the task force focused on the question of rostering people living in lifelong, monogamous,
259 same-gender relationships. Although the fourth resolution addresses the relationships of people who are
or wish to be rostered, the task force believes that this

260 question can be considered only if this church

261 offers the possibility of public accountability to lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships. The
262 task force considers this a necessary prior step because this church expects that all its rostered leaders will
263 be held accountable in their relationships. Therefore, the task force asks the assembly to clarify its intent
264 on the general question of recognizing, supporting, and holding publicly accountable these relationships,
265 noting that approval of this first resolution would not imply commitment to a particular way of
266 accomplishing this.

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268 **Step two** asks the assembly whether, in principle, it is committed to finding a way for people in such
269 publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of
270 this church.

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272 This step is based on the assumption that, before being able to consider specific proposals for how to
273 accomplish such a change, this church must decide, in principle, whether or not it wants to move in this
274 direction. The approval of this second resolution would not, at this step, imply a commitment to a
275 particular way of accomplishing this.

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277 **Step three** asks this church whether, in the future implementation of steps one and two (see above), it will
278 commit to doing so in such a way that all in this church bear the burdens of the other, love the neighbor,
279 and respect the bound conscience of any with whom they disagree.

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281 This step recognizes that agreement in this church on this matter does not exist. Therefore, decisions
282 about policy that serve only the interests of one or another group will not be acceptable. If this church
283 intends to move toward change or to decline to change, this step commits it to doing so in ways that
284 respect the convictions and provide space for the faithful witness of all.

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286 **Step four** then presents a proposal for how this church could move toward change in a way that respects
287 the bound conscience of all.