

Hispanic Pastors Respond to 2009 Churchwide Assembly Decisions

Hispanic ELCA rostered leaders of the Florida-Bahamas Synod

We have received with profound sadness the ELCA Churchwide Assembly decision of passing a Social Statement on Human Sexuality which significantly changes the historical teaching and practice of the Church on Sexuality. We have also read with great disappointment and grave concern the changing of our ministry standards, allowing non-celibate homosexual pastors, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses to serve as rostered leaders in the ELCA.

We, Hispanic ELCA rostered leaders of the Florida-Bahamas Synod, REPUDIATE these new policies, declaring them to be incompatible with Christian teaching, the tradition of the Christian Church, and our consciences. As Martin Luther did in his own day, we reject the idea that ANY human being, prelate, council, or Assembly, can rightfully vote to invalidate the teachings of Holy Scripture.

It is clear to us that the ELCA has decided to stop recognizing the Authority of the Bible, presenting a different and diluted Gospel not in accordance with the teaching of the Scriptures (Galatians 1:6-10). Therefore, we RENOUNCE the decision of the Churchwide Assembly and will continue to uphold the clear Biblical standards for marriage, family, and sexuality.

May God have Mercy on His Church.

SIGNATORIES (in alphabetical order)

- Rev. Giacomo Cassese, PhD., Hope, Miami, FL
- Rev. Bishop Edelmiro Cortes (Caribbean Synod, ret.), St. Cloud, FL
- Rev. Remedios Cruz, Jesus Rey de Gloria, Hialeah, FL
- Rev. Gilberto Falcon, Plymouth, FL
- Mrs. Eva Gallardo, AIM, Principe de Paz, Miami, FL
- Rev. Lenier Gallardo, D.Min., Príncipe de Paz, Miami, FL
- Rev. Juan Gutiérrez, Loxahatchee, FL
- Rev. Esteban Mesa, Monte de Sion, Hialeah, FL
- Rev. Eliezer Ortiz, Lord of Life, Miami, FL
- Rev. Eddy Perez, MD, San Pedro, Miami, FL
- Rev. Sergio Ramos, Prince of Peace, Margate, FL

Statement of three President Emeriti of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church

Mekane Yesus regarding human sexuality decisions made by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly currently meeting in Minneapolis

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with the Churchwide Assembly,

We the three president emeritus of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (5.5 million members, the largest Lutheran church body in Africa and the fastest growing Lutheran church in the world) have been following the development of your deliberations on human sexuality and ministry policies with deep prayer in the spirit of our global Lutheran communion. We have a very deep appreciation for the seriousness and diligence of ELCA and our other partner churches in grappling with this challenging social and cultural issue of these days. Thus our earnest prayer would continue to be with you.

The historic companionship between the ELCA and our church, EECMY, bears witness to our mutual commitment to each other deeply grounded in our biblical faith and Lutheran identity. Therefore in this difficult time our people in and out of the country are fasting and praying that you will remain true to our common faith, tradition and joint evangelical mission.

In these historic days we have been deeply alarmed by the direction you are choosing to take. Thus we have to inform you with a heavy heart that we are deeply saddened and dismayed by the decisions you are taking at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis regarding human sexuality. We see it as a defiant departure from the Biblical truth and from our global Evangelical Lutheran tradition. Our position, based on the word of God, is and will continue to be that marriage is between one man and one woman.

Human behavior and practices may change over times but the holy and inspired word of God will never change. We are therefore urged in the spirit of our long standing companionship to express our deep concern and resentment to these assembly decisions coming down in the form of a social statement, ministry policies and practices.

Please know that as shepherds of God's flock we love all people of God and pray that the Lord may forgive all our sins and guide all of us through his everlasting word of God.

Sincerely,

- President Emeritus the Rev. Francis Stephanos
- President Emeritus the Rev. Yadesa Daba
- President Emeritus the Rev. Itefa Gobena
- August 21, 2009

Some 60 Chinese pastors respond to ELCA decision from the Center for Chinese Ministry

On September 16 – 19, 2009, about 60 Chinese pastors and lay-leaders of the ELCA gathered at Monterey Park, California, for a retreat organized by the Center for Chinese Ministry. During the retreat, they unanimously agreed and issued a public statement in response to the “resolution to call and ordain non-celibate homosexual pastors” passed at the ELCA Church-wide Assembly on August 21, 2009

Here is the statement:

We absolutely disagree with the above mentioned resolution to call and ordain homosexual pastors.

It may be true that sexual orientation comes with birth, and it may not be a choice; but we know that in this corrupted world many people are born with defects or problems. Something that comes with birth does not necessarily make it good or right. All of us are born with a sinful nature, and we naturally enjoy doing sinful deeds. Yet we do not think that it is right for us to be evil. That is exactly why we need Jesus Christ to save us and change us.

We understand that many gays and lesbians deeply suffer in their sexual struggle; we should care for them and help them, but we cannot endorse their homosexual behavior due to the following:

1. Biblically: We cannot find any passage in the Bible that clearly and directly supports homosexual behavior. In the Bible, all passages regarding homosexual behavior clearly state that this type of behavior is not permitted by God, and thus it should be prohibited.
2. Theologically: In terms of the creation, at the beginning when God created the first human couple on earth, His original plan for marriage is for one man and one woman. We do not believe that God has another design for family and marriage, and we should put our trust only in God's original design, not any other alternatives.
3. Sociologically: We know that parents are the most important models for children. In a “homosexual family” the roles of father and mother are confusing, thus the children will be confused and easy lost. This confusion will cause an enormous damage to the society in the coming generations. Marriage is not a private issue; it surely has a major influence on the society.
4. Ecclesiastically: As the majority of the Chinese do not accept homosexual behaviors, this resolution has posted a distorted image on the Chinese congregations of the ELCA, as it appears that we are agreeing with the resolution to accept and ordain homosexual pastors. This will create significant hindrances to our ministries in the Chinese communities.

As Lutheran congregations, the one thing we have learned from our Lutheran heritage is to take the Bible as our ultimate authority in faith and in ministry. Thus, we submit ourselves to the authority of the Bible, but not the Pope, nor the Presiding Bishop, nor the resolution of the Church-wide Assembly, nor the voices and urges from the world. Any important resolution passed by a church body has to be supported by clear and direct passages from the Bible; otherwise it is a serious mistake!

Unless anyone can prove from the Bible that we are wrong in our understanding with regards to homosexuality, we will firmly keep our stance. Martin Luther had demonstrated a great example at the Diet of Worms, and as the result the Lutheran Church was founded. As Lutheran Churches, we respect the Bible as the ultimate authority of our Christian faith.

The original Chinese version of this statement will be posted on pertinent websites, published in the Herald Monthly (a Chinese Christian monthly), and distributed among the Lutheran churches in the United States, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore.

An English version of this statement is to be forwarded to Bishop Mark Hanson, the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, Bishops of all ELCA synods, AAPI (Association of Asian & Pacific Islander), Multicultural Ministry Unit---ELCA, Lutheran "CORE" (Coalition for Reform), LWF, "THE LUTHERAN" (ELCA Magazine) and "Christianity Today".