

**Letters email to the office prior to the Congregation Forum on Oct. 4, 2009**

October 2, 2009

Dear Pastor Don and Pastor Jason,

I am writing this to clarify and express my viewpoint on the ELCA social statement that deals with the issue of human sexuality and same gender relationships. However as I sit down to compose some kind of coherent thoughts that share my view I was struck with how much my life has changed personally over the past 6 months.

I am telling you this to share the perspective I have regarding the ELCA social statements. I am an infant in my study of the Bible but have found such comfort and guidance and quite frankly it has "spoken" to me on more than one occasion when I have prayed and read it. So I understand the concept that it is the Living Word and not an ancient text to be memorized and obeyed. So in my discernment process I tried to pray and receive guidance from the Bible. I realized I was somewhat biased in my approach as I sought only those texts that supported my view. I then received Kay Vallers letter which so eloquently expressed not only my views on homosexuality but my thoughts regarding the positive things happening at LCR.

To summarize my thoughts:

1. I support the ELCA in their view of human sexuality and support of monogamous committed same gender relationships.
2. I do not believe that homosexuality in itself is a sin but is part of the many varieties of human beings that God created along a spectrum. I believe that people who are homosexual are equal members of God's family and should be welcome as part of our church.
3. I as Kay said truly empathize with those in our congregation who feel homosexual behavior is a sin and therefore are struggling with this social statement.
4. I agree with Kay that it is possible to go forward as a congregation with our many various opinions on this topic and still be a part of the ELCA as we have not been told to change anything in how our congregation conducts its work with its members or in the community.

My thoughts and prayers are with you both and Church Council this weekend. I apologize again for having to be absent for both retreat and the forum. Feel free to paraphrase this email or even print in entirety to share if you think it is useful.

Take care,

Katy Carlsen

Oct. 2, 2009

Dear Pastor Don and Council,

I am writing this e-mail letter because I will be out of town for a couple weeks and will miss this Sunday's Forum, but I wanted you to know my thoughts and prayers are with you. I have talked with Pastor Don, several of you and some of our members about how to hold our congregation together in light of the Synod Resolutions on homosexuality. I have not made any public statements because I agree with the Synod. I have several homosexual friends in permanent relationships; two of them raising children, working as teachers, nurses one as a pastor - all contributing to our world. I have also worked with youth struggling to understand (and sometimes trying to ignore) the fact that they do not fit into society's norms. I don't pretend to completely understand; I just feel they deserve to be part of God's family and have something to contribute.

That being said, I would selfishly have wished the Synod had not put this burden on our church at this time. There is so much positive happening at LCR!

- the Contemporary Service has become a vibrant, vital part of our worship
- our Youth Program, a focus for so long, is growing and blooming;
- we are expanding our ministry in the community;
- Sunday School and VBS draw more children and helpers of all ages each year;
- Bible Studies have become more varied and convenient with member-leaders.

My heart goes out to those who feel so strongly about the resolutions that they are struggling with remaining with our church and I respect their convictions. I know others are not pleased with the resolutions, but feel our Church family offers so much to them and our community. They will continue at LCR. Still others are struggling to understand the issue

and what it means. These last two groups are my main concern because I don't think we know yet how the Synod final resolutions might affect our church family. As leaders, I think your job now is to reaffirm how we address some of their current concerns and what we need to be aware of down the road.

I'd ask you to consider that:

- These Resolutions are information on our Synods views on dealing with homosexuality; they do not require us to do anything but inform our congregation and stay involved. It will be important that our church be involved in our Synod and that the Council continue to keep our members informed of Synod decisions. I would expect the Synod to provide some direction for churches to consider in hiring future staff. Having just been through this at all levels, we know we always have a great deal of discretion.
- Our Sunday School Staff, Confirmation leaders and Bible School Staffs, Bible Study leaders are staff, congregation members and parents, available to meet with members. The Curriculums and programs are open for review and many can be accessed on the web.
- Pastor Don and Pastor Jason have met with many members and are available to groups or individuals with concerns.
- We need to care for each other, our staff and our members as we continue to support and expand our work.
- We need to love, respect and pray for those who may not be able to reconcile their beliefs with these Resolutions as they determine their future walk with Christ.

God Bless you all,  
Kay Valler

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September 29, 2009

There has been a lot of discussion on the Synod Social Statement and associated resolutions regarding Human Sexuality in our Congregation. I think it's safe to say that people's emotions and opinions regarding the resolutions vary from one end of the spectrum to the other and everywhere in between. However, after the debate and forums are over, I don't believe many minds will have been changed. So I'm concerned about the following. Where do we go from here? If we continue to be *consumed* by the Synod Social Policy this is going to continue to detract us and our pastors from our mission. It grieves me to see the potential division to Resurrection, a church that I love and call home.

Maybe I'm over simplifying the issue, but it seems like in the final analysis we will each need to choose whether we want to continue to be members of LCR and to be a part of the ELCA Synod.

I'd like to poll each of our Council leaders as to where each stands regarding the ELCA. Council member, do you want this church to continue to be part of the ELCA and why or why not?

Respectfully submitted by Linda Waage

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Hi everyone,

I need some clarification on this memo as I have been away from our church for several Sundays. I am committed this Sunday yet, I feel I should share my Christian experiences with you. I went to New Mexico to see my aging uncle and then to a friends 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. I have also been in the bay area visiting friends and family. I have attended Lutheran Churches in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, San Bruno and San Mateo. In each church there has been celebration over the passing of the **Human Sexuality Statement: Gift and Trust**. I hope that is true in our church too. However, the invitation makes me believe there is a problem.

I have no questions for the forum, unless there is disagreement over the statement having finally passed. I applaud those that voted for this statement. It shows we are entering into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as was stated in a few sermons this past 5 weeks.

Long ago, I began attending assemblies on these issues with Pastor Paul. I have kept an interest in many of the issues over the years! The social statement addresses many complex issues as you know. Being a Christian I am pleased the statement not only addresses grace, trust, the Ten Commandments, faith, freedoms, friendships, marriage, relationships, family, trust, but also includes many social issues I have worked on in the greater Sacramento area. These include sexual abuse, sex-trade, sexual exploitations, professional misconduct, children, divorce, sexuality outside marriage, and being all inclusive is also important! Human Sexuality has been a topic that was discussed in assembly for a long time. It

has taken our church much too long to pass this statement making all of us equal disciples and making religious issues more clear and understandable.

***These are parts of sermons I have heard in my travels:***

**The Pastor in Albuquerque** shared with us how proud he was that this Statement had passed and shared that within this statement the ELCA is opposed to all forms of violence and discrimination against anyone. There is so much violence and injustice in the Bible. Our church will now welcome all people of any color, age or sexual orientation, and their families into our congregations. We may not always agree or even understand yet, we will be accepting! We will all worship respecting each other even if we have differences. He said the changes will take time to be written and some will need time to adjust to these new life lessons. We need to implement these ideas as we know there are many in our community that will welcome hearing this news and join our church family.

**The Pastor at Christ Lutheran in Santa Fe** told of attending the assembly with his region and several congregational members who also voted for the Human Sexuality Statement. He said the weather in Minneapolis that week had been stormy, yet, there was hope the statement would pass and everyone would be able to celebrate and share a meal on an outside patio. When it came time to vote the storm was at a tornado level, as soon as the votes were cast the storm subsided and the sun came out. This pastor told of the chairs and tables being relocated with the wind to the roof of the convention center. He said it appeared that God had made his presence known as if the sunshine was a blessing! The storm could have resulted in more severe damage.

**In San Bruno** the pastor said "at last our church is accepting God's words when he said, 'Come unto me ALL my children.'" He meant just that. Every one come unto me! We sang a hymn from the red book #805. The last line was how each Christian is called to respect and protect other believers with whom they disagree. This is one way that each person can accept the differences on this matter. With dignity we need to support and respect all relationships. We consider the Bible to be the sacred book because it contains many stories of life issues. The authors were travelers and many of the stories are their interpretations. We need to remember this when understanding the Human Sexuality Statement. We know God loves us all and welcomes us. *I am sure there were many gay and lesbians participating in the service.*

**The Pastor in San Mateo** was able to share that lesbian women and gay men in the near future can be an ELCA pastor, deaconess, minister, or associate minister. Our church will honor their differences, honor their partners and their children should they have a family. Some feel a sense of urgency and a commitment to get the policies in place. There are so many people with different life styles trying to live their lives in faith, just as we are. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century and we all need to identify with the changes and accept them. We will look forward to differences be accepted and moving forward together.

I have celebrated with these churches. Only one church did not have the information from the assembly available for congregations to take home and read. I have many gay and lesbian friends. I imagine that is because I do not judge people, they have to prove me wrong before I don't trust or believe in them. I have attended Lutheran and Presbyterian churches in Sacramento where the pastor was lesbian and gay and they were phenomenal in their offerings to their congregations. We are not the ones to make judgments of others!

I could go on and on of how pleased I am that our assembly put us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as two pastors stated. I have obligations for Sunday that I have been unable to get out of at this time, however, if I can be attendance I will be there.

Yours,  
Chris Steele