

October 7, 2009

Dear Bishops Hanson and Holmerud, Pastor Don Haven, and LCR Council,

We have read the entire Social Statement, the resolutions, various statements from the ELCA website and by American, Hispanic and African pastors and bishops. We are pleased with the portions of the Social Statement that seek to protect women and children, and eliminate pornography.

We are strongly opposed to resolutions #1 ("the ELCA commit itself to finding ways...to recognize, support...same-gender relationships") and #2 ("the ELCA commit itself...for people in such...same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church"). Many people are being driven right out of our church family by these statements, who have served our congregation and community for many years, as committee members; Sunday school and VBS teachers; musicians, organists and accompanists; Council members; and Stephen ministers. In addition to this personal and spiritual loss, there is another sizable group of congregants who has stopped all giving until they are assured none of their tithes and offerings will be passed along to the Sierra Pacific Synod and/or the ELCA, which puts the financial viability of LCR in jeopardy. Many people are discussing whether they could remain with this church family, if it left the ELCA.

We respectfully urge you to revise the troublesome resolutions immediately to a less polarizing position. For instance, "Recognizing that Lutheran Christians have different understandings of the Word of God, and of what Jesus taught regarding homosexuality, the ELCA takes no official position on life-long, same-gender relationships." Allow us to keep the conversations going, and work together for the good of the community while having this difference of opinion.

Apparently, ELCA congregations may already choose to call and employ openly gay pastors who are dating, or in registered domestic partnerships with, members of the same gender (Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries' roster). A reasonable step for these 41 people might be, "ELCA congregations may continue to call and employ Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries-rostered (openly homosexual) pastors at their discretion. ELCA will make available to all pastors who serve ELCA congregations similar vacation, health and pension benefits; and will list their names and affiliations on all ELCA publications and websites, rather than leaving the line after "Pastor" blank, as past practice has been."

Consider the needs of the whole church and community; refrain from driving out any more faithful Lutherans who have a traditional understanding of the bible's, and Luther's, position on homosexuality. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Roger and Lorraine Littlejohn