

October 8, 2009

Dear Resurrection Disciples,

Lutheran Church of the Resurrection is a community of Grace through Jesus Christ called to be in the mission: "Growing Disciples by Sharing God's Love". Resurrection is a gift to this community and church at large. During these past few weeks we have been able to explore together what it means for us to be a "discipleship" congregation during our "Power Surge" Marks of Discipleship sermon series. We have a number of wonderful Bible Study opportunities that continue to grow and enable people to come to a deeper understanding of the scriptures – our first language of Faith. Our youth and children are actively engaged as learners. We're continuing to find more ways to grow as servants to the community and to care for one another within this faith community. And in the midst of it all, we're having challenging conversations about the ELCA's recent decisions at the recent ELCA Churchwide Assembly regarding the Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust.

Please join me in continuing to pray for discernment and wisdom as our congregation moves through conversations on a topic that can be very sensitive and controversial. Be assured that I want to encourage every person in this congregation to express your opinions and ideas as you continue to reflect upon how your faith is calling you to respond and grow. Your leaders will continue to communicate with you in as many ways as possible. I firmly believe that people can hold differing opinions in tension and honor the other while continuing to be faithful members of this congregation – that's a reality that's happened for years at Resurrection and in most Lutheran congregations.

I am grateful to all of you who attended the congregational forum this past Sunday and for your willingness to submit some very difficult, heartfelt questions and to listen to responses to those questions in an atmosphere of Christian love. Please read through the attachment to this newsletter which contains responses to frequently asked questions prepared by Bishop Martin Wells of the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod. I offer and encourage you to read Bp. Well's reflections from the floor of the Assembly during the votes on these resolutions in the following link: http://www.ewaidsynod.org/images/CW_ASSEMBLY_8-21-09.pdf. I believe it will be very helpful for each of you as you come to an understand of how these decisions came to be. Our own Bishop, Mark Holmerud, has affirmed our use of this document as a tool for enlightening our conversations and will be adding his own thoughts and comments in the future.

A number of you have expressed your thoughts, feelings and opinions to me and to our leadership in conversation, emails, and letters. Some of you have expressed your disappointment in and disagreement with the ELCA Churchwide Assembly's actions in regards to the adoption of the Social Statement on Human Sexuality. Others of you have expressed how pleased you are with the decisions that were made. And still others of you have expressed that you will continue to participate in the life of Resurrection whether or not you voice your opinion as to your agreement or disagreement with the ELCA Assembly's decisions. Each one of you, of course, is free to write letters, send emails, and make phone calls to our congregation leaders, our Sierra Pacific Synod leaders and staff as well as to the leaders and staff of the ELCA. This is a time for careful, prayerful thought, patience and responsible churchmanship. Our constitution and bylaws provide for orderly means by which concerns of members of the congregation can be shared and decisions made.

Three things in particular I would ask you to carefully consider.

First of all, some of you have indicated that, because of your disagreement with the ELCA Assembly's decisions, you are considering or choosing to withhold funds from our congregation and give to other charities or that you will give only to a designated fund at Resurrection so that no portion of it will go to the Sierra

Pacific Synod and the ELCA Churchwide Ministries. The church council is exploring if and how that might be made a possibility. Please consider that decision very prayerfully and carefully. First of all, there are many more appropriate ways to communicate your feelings with the ELCA as I indicated above in paragraph 4 above. Here are some questions from Bishop Wayne Miller that I would ask you to reflect upon before considering withholding or redirecting mission support dollars as a protest against the ELCA Assembly action:

- **Who will be helped and who will be hurt by this decision?**
- **Is this likely outcome consistent with your intention?**
- **Explain the understandings of “church” and “stewardship” that are expressed and modeled by this choice.**
- **If members of your own congregation follow this example, what would be the likely impact on your local mission as a congregation?**
- **With these things in mind, who would be helped and who would be hurt by this choice?**
- **Is there a better way to accomplish what you’re trying to do?**
- **Explore all you can about all of the ministries including our camps, Lutheran Social Services, colleges and universities, missionaries, hunger programs, disaster relief, youth ministry support, etc. that are part of our interdependent church body of the ELCA. Go to the websites at www.spselca.org and www.elca.org and learn as much as you can about what our congregation’s support does for ministry and mission in the world.**

Secondly, please keep in mind that none of the resolutions that were adopted by the Assembly have gone into effect. The ELCA Church Council will meet in November to consider how and when they will be implemented and if there may be any reconsideration by the Church at large. So please be patient in making assumptions about what impact the resolutions have or have not made. I have encountered a great deal of misinformation and “missed” information in the past few weeks.

Thirdly, please be very careful about using generalized proclamations about what “The Bible says” or making statements that the “Synod” or the “ELCA” is “ignoring” the teaching of Scriptures. It is not uncommon, as we read, study and prioritize Scripture, that we can also use or neglect, underline or ignore biblical passages. The Scriptures are and continue to be the Word of God and the “cradle” in which the crucified and Risen Christ lays. The Scriptures are the “Living Word” that has and will continue to address us through both the Law and the Gospel in ways that will redeem us and transform us into Christ’s disciples.

I urge you to move into the days ahead with these words in mind from the letter of Paul to the Colossians:

“As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other, just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Colossians 3: 12-17

God’s Blessings and Peace,

Pastor Don