

TO: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
FROM: Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick, President
SUBJECT: Statement regarding 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly Action
DATE: August 13, 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ, Savior of the world and Lord of the universe, through whom alone we receive forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation!

On the final day of its 2007 Churchwide Assembly in Chicago (Saturday, August 11), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) adopted a resolution which “prays, urges, and encourages [ELCA geographical] synods, synodical bishops, and the presiding bishop to refrain from or demonstrate restraint in disciplining those rostered leaders in a mutual, chaste, and faithful committed same-gender relationship who have been called and rostered in this church.”

News of this action troubles me greatly and is causing serious concern and consternation among the members and leaders of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). We in the LCMS hold firmly to the conviction that, according to the Holy Bible, homosexual behavior is “intrinsically sinful.” We are deeply disappointed that the ELCA, by its decision, has failed to act in keeping with the historic and universal understanding of the Christian church regarding what Holy Scripture teaches about homosexual behavior as contrary to God's will and about the biblical qualifications for holding the pastoral office.

The LCMS firmly believes that the sin of homosexual behavior, like every sin that fallen human beings commit, has been paid for in full by the life, suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The LCMS also believes that we must continue to reach out in love to all people on the basis of what God's Word alone teaches about human sinfulness, God's grace in Christ, and the new life empowered by God's Holy Spirit.

It should be noted that the ELCA voted not to amend at this time its governing documents regarding the expectations of its ordained workers in this area (this matter was referred to its task force on sexuality). However, its decision “to refrain from or demonstrate restraint in disciplining” ELCA workers in “a mutual, chaste, and faithful committed same-gender relationship” raises troubling questions about whether the expectations set forth in its governing documents will be taken seriously by the ELCA or by the task force. The potential implications of decisions such as this for future LCMS-ELCA relations have been discussed in previous meetings involving leaders of the LCMS and the ELCA. In addition, I stated in my official greetings to the 2007 ELCA Assembly on Friday, August 10, “For the sake of our mutual witness and service together, the implications of such action, should it be taken, would need to be addressed, fraternally and evangelically.”

As the LCMS noted in a resolution adopted at its 2001 Convention (Resolution 3-21A), “we of the LCMS recognize that many of our brothers and sisters of the ELCA remain faithful to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and we resolve to reach out to them in love and support.” As President of the LCMS, it is my ongoing hope and fervent prayer — as stated in my remarks to the 2003 ELCA Assembly — that the ELCA's continuing “study and deliberation of this matter will be made in the light of the biblical understanding of human sexuality and the qualifications for the pastoral office.” I also pray that God the Holy Spirit will lead and guide all Christians and Christian denominations everywhere to seek wisdom and truth from God's inspired, inerrant, infallible Word on this and other critical issues in our contemporary church and culture.

Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick, President
The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

"Transforming lives through Christ's love ... in time ... for eternity ..." John 3:16-17

