

Saskatchewan Synod

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

A Pastoral Letter to Rostered Ministers and Congregations - July 21, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Thirteenth Biennial Convention of the ELCIC has concluded. Today I am writing to address two policies adopted at this convention that have implications for congregational and pastoral practice.

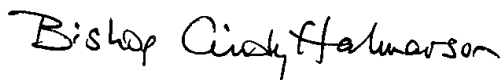
It is the policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada that rostered ministers may, according to the dictates of their consciences as informed by the Gospel, the Scriptures, the ecumenical creeds and the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, preside at or bless legal marriages according to the laws of the province within which they serve. All rostered ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada are encouraged to exercise due diligence in preparing couples for marriage. All rostered ministers serving congregations are encouraged at all times to conduct their ministry in consultation with the lay leaders in the congregation and with sensitivity to the culture within which the congregation serves. M/S/C.

It is the policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada that sexual orientation is not in itself a factor which disqualifies a candidate for rostered ministry or a rostered minister seeking a call. Candidates and rostered ministers are in all cases expected to adhere to the qualifications and standards as set out in the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and of the synod within which they serve. Synods and congregations are expected to evaluate candidates for ordination or consecration and rostered ministers for call in accordance with a conscience informed by the Gospel, the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. M/S/C.

The discussion at the convention was spirited and reflected strong opinions held for and against these proposals. Within our synod and congregations the same range of views are held leading some to celebrate these decisions and others to be dismayed or distressed at them. A third related motion passed by the national convention affirms our unity in Christ despite deep differences. In my view the motions permit full ministry by and with homosexual persons without compelling pastors, diaconal ministers or congregations to act contrary to their conscience. **As bishop I will do my best to respect each congregation's stated views in relation to the call of rostered ministers and local ministry practice.**

With these policies come the likelihood that some congregations and pastors will agree to requests by couples to officiate at same-sex marriages or blessings of civil unions. Accompanying this letter are **pastoral guidelines** for congregations and pastors as they consider whether they can, in good conscience, offer marriage services to same-sex couples. Everyone is encouraged to take prayerful, careful time while setting local policies and practices. May God guide and uphold us as we seek to be faithful to the gospel.

Grace and peace,



Cynthia G. Halmarson, Bishop

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