

August 24, 2009

## **Statement of the president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in response to certain actions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

The two largest Lutheran church bodies in the United States are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) with 4.8 million members and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) with 2.4 million members.

On Friday, Aug. 21, the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America voted to open the ministry of the ELCA to gay and lesbian pastors and other professional workers living in “committed relationships.” In an earlier action, the assembly approved a resolution that commits the ELCA “to finding ways to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize, support, and hold publicly accountable life-long, monogamous, same-gender relationships.”

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has repeatedly affirmed as its own position the historical understanding of the Christian church that the Bible condemns homosexual behavior as “inherently sinful.” It is therefore contrary to the will of the Creator and constitutes sin against the commandments of God (Lev. 18:22, 24,20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-20; 1 Tim 1:9-10; and Rom. 1:26, 27).

Addressing the ELCA assembly on Saturday, Aug. 22, I responded to their aforementioned actions, stating: “The decisions by this assembly to grant non-celibate homosexual ministers the privilege of serving as rostered leaders in the ELCA and the affirmation of same-gender unions as pleasing to God will undoubtedly cause additional stress and disharmony within the ELCA. It will also negatively affect the relationships between our two church bodies. The current division between our churches threatens to become a chasm. This grieves my heart and the hearts of all in the ELCA, the LCMS, and other Christian church bodies throughout the world who do not see these decisions as compatible with the Word of God, or in agreement with the consensus of 2,000 years of Christian theological affirmation regarding what Scripture teaches about human sexuality. Simply stated, this matter is fundamentally related to significant differences in how we [our two church bodies] understand the authority of Holy Scripture and the interpretation of God’s revealed and infallible Word.”

Doctrinal decisions adopted already in 2001 led the LCMS, in sincere humility and love, to declare that we could no longer consider the ELCA “to be an orthodox Lutheran church body” (2001 Res 3-21A). Sadly, the decisions of this past week to ignore biblical teaching on human sexuality have reinforced that conclusion. We respect the desire to follow conscience in moral decision making, but conscience may not overrule the Word of God.

We recognize that many brothers and sisters within the ELCA, both clergy and lay, are committed to remaining faithful to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, are committed to the authority of Holy Scripture, and strongly oppose these actions. To them we offer our assurance of loving encouragement together with our willingness to provide appropriate support in their efforts to remain faithful to the Word of God and the historic teachings of the Lutheran church and all other Christian churches for the past 2,000 years.

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

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

[Editor’s Note: A complete draft of President Kieschnick’s address to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly is posted on the LCMS Web site at [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org).]