

A Congregational Submission Regarding The Issue Of Same-Sex Blessings

Presented By The Church Council Of
Lord Of All Lutheran Church ~ Strathmore Alberta

On behalf of our congregation at Lord of All, we would like to share our concerns over the process of what is taking place at the National Convention of the ELCIC, regarding the issue of Same-Sex Blessings, in July of 2005, in Winnipeg MB.

The proposed resolutions and accompanying documentation have been presented to our council, and to our congregation, and over the past weeks council has met to discuss and discern the best way to respond to the issue as presented. A number of our council members have read through some of the papers on the national website, we have obtained copies of the prepared study, and we have appointed a congregational delegate to attend the convention. However, all of those steps being taken, we have some concerns about the process that is being followed at this time, regarding such a controversial and potentially divisive issue.

We would like to raise the question about the purpose of having workshops or meetings at the convention as is referred to in the convention information site on the ELCIC website, as they hardly assist us as a congregation to discuss the issue and determine the way our delegate will vote on our behalf. It seems as if this issue has arisen rather suddenly, although we understand it has been in discussion for some time. However to suddenly be calling for a “resolution” adoption, when we have not been given adequate material or time to process the material, as individual members, and as a congregation, makes the entire process somewhat suspect.

As well, after attempting to read and understand the papers presented on the ELCIC website, a number of us found it difficult to understand the higher theological language and scriptural discourses presented. We have also taken time to look at the more recent submissions, and note that for the most part, they too are difficult for us to understand. We would appreciate some material that is somewhat more approachable to study as a congregation. While we have gathered and tried to understand much of the material, it's high language and presentation makes it hard for even those who do grasp some of it's meaning, to share them in a way that is “user friendly”.

We have taken a look at the “Social Statement On Marriage” as it now stands, and would wonder if the changes to the social statement might be studied and completed, to allow us theological insight prior to moving ahead with the vote on the resolutions that are being presented. It would seem logical to study and proceed with decision making on this issue in a more logical order, allowing for input from our congregational members, through more of the process than just the vote at the convention. It seems to us that slowing the process down, in order to have greater understanding and involvement from all members would be logical. If there is some rationale for how quickly the process seems to be moving ahead, and for the way in which it is being addressed, it would be helpful to understand.

As it presently stands, we are concerned that the studies, the preparatory material, and in fact the process we are using, does not allow adequate time for preparation of our membership to vote with wisdom and discernment, based on the teachings of the Scriptures, and of our Lutheran theology. For that reason, we would like to recommend the following...

- + As a church body, we continue to seek out our Lord's guidance and the wisdom to discern God's teaching on this issue.
- + That the present process be followed through in a logical format starting with a further study of scriptures and of our theological grounding. If these studies have taken place already, these studies need to be presented for congregations in a notably more user friendly pattern, that may be read and considered by the average congregation member. Such material ought be balanced, presenting both positions on the issue in comprehensible and clear format.
- + The process be provisionally delayed until such time as the congregations have had opportunity to prepare, and may come to an informed decision, trusting in the Holy Spirit's guidance, and rooted in Lutheran theology and the Holy Scriptures.

Respectfully Submitted ~
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