



Pastoral Statement on Faith and Human Sexuality: September 2021

As you may know, in 2009 the ELCA churchwide assembly adopted a resolution concerning Human Sexuality. The chief question that the resolution addressed was how the biblical mandate of inclusion relates to people of same-sex orientation, and specifically, could same-sex clergy couples be considered when called to local congregations. A resolution was adopted which states that congregations would not be subject to discipline if they called pastors living in open monogamous same-sex relationships (marriage was not a civil option at that point). The implication was that the decision to call pastors living in "open" relationships would be left to local congregations. The statement also made clear that the ELCA does not have consensus over the moral teaching as it relates to the place such relationships (today LGBTQ+) hold in the Christian community. The following is an excerpt from the summary document of the eventual social statement.

The trust and mutuality afforded by marriage offers one of the most beautiful, abiding, and transformative forms of human relationship. This church understands marriage as a covenant of mutual promises, commitment, and hope authorized legally by the state and blessed by God. The historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions have recognized marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman.

It is only within the last decades that this church has begun to understand in new ways the need of same-gender oriented individuals to seek relationships of lifelong companionship and commitment as well as public accountability and legal support for those commitments. This has led to differing understandings about the place of such relationships within the Christian community. Disagreements exist in this church and in the larger Christian community about whether marriage is also the appropriate term to use to describe similar benefits, protection, and support for same-gender couples entering into lifelong, monogamous relationships.

Although at this time this church lacks consensus on this matter, it encourages all people to live out their faith in the local and global community of the baptized with profound respect for the conscience-bound belief of the neighbor. This church calls for mutual respect and for guidance that seeks the good of all. As we live together with disagreement, the people in this church will continue to accompany one another in study, prayer, discernment, pastoral care, and mutual respect.

-2009 excerpt from ELCA Summary of Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust

What does this mean for Bethany?

- Bethany will continue to live without consensus on the moral teaching of this matter. We will continue to respect the diversity of views within our congregation and defend the conscience of those who differ on their biblical perspectives.
- Bethany will continue to aspire to model the Love of Christ for our neighbor. *To Love Abundantly* is a core value and therefore as a standard of practice we will continue to support the dignity of Bethany guests and members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- Any Bethany ministry initiative which supports individuals of the LGBTQ+ community will come from the call to model and live under the gospel of Christ, and as such places as secondary the need to adopt a "position or stance" as it relates to this topic.

Please consider reading the full ELCA Social Statement you can review at elca.org/social-statement

All God's Blessings,

Handwritten signatures in cursive script. The first signature appears to be 'Jon' and the second is 'Liz Dusetto Pearl'.

Pr. Jon & Pr. Liz