

2009 Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly
Committee on Memorials
Recommendation 2

pass

The Committee on Memorials recommends the adoption of the following memorial which was submitted by Conferences One, Three, Four, and in response to Resolve 7b in a memorial from Conference Five:

**Resolution Rejecting Recommendations on Ministry Policy
and Affirming Current ELCA Policy**

WHEREAS, the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted "to direct the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality specifically to address and to make recommendations to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly on changes to any church policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the rosters of this church;" and

WHEREAS, the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly will consider recommendations from the *Report and Recommendations on Ministry Policies* from the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality; and

WHEREAS, the *Report and Recommendations on Ministry Policies* asks the ELCA to change its teaching and policy to affirm the possibility of same-sex sexual relationships for pastors and other rostered leaders in the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America states: "This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life" (*ELCA Constitution, 2.03*); and

WHEREAS, many ELCA members and most Christian churches — including most churches in the Lutheran World Federation — believe that Scripture is clear in its teaching about marriage and homosexual behavior; and

WHEREAS, a synodical or congregational option on ministry standards would represent a real change in the teaching of our church forcing even those synods and congregations that do not agree with this change implicitly to accept the notion that Scripture is not clear in its teaching about marriage or about homosexual behavior; and

WHEREAS, the interdependent relationship between the churchwide, synod, and congregational expressions of the ELCA requires one Office of Ministry, one roster of pastors, and one set of expectations for pastors and other rostered leaders throughout the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA currently expresses its expectations of pastors and other rostered leaders through documents called *Vision and Expectations* and *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline* which have served the ELCA well for most of its history; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly thank the members of Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality for their work; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorialize the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to reject the proposals in the *Report and Recommendations on Ministry Policies* from the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly memorialize the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to reaffirm the ELCA's current standards for pastors and other rostered leaders as expressed in *Vision and Expectations* and *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*.

A MEMORIAL CONCERNING HUMAN SEXUALITY AND THE STANDARDS OF VISION &
EXPECTATIONS FROM THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD
TO THE 2009 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

from
Conference 5

WHEREAS, the church, guided by the Holy Spirit, raises up, calls, supports, and maintains rosters of ordained ministers, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers for public ministry in service of the mission of Christ; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force for ELCA Studies in Sexuality has earnestly studied and struggled with these matters for eight years, for respectful dialogue regarding sexuality throughout this church; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Social Statement declares that there is no consensus regarding same-gender relationships or the rostered ministry of people in them; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Church Council, at its March 2009 meeting, voted to recommend to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality, its implementing resolutions, and a Recommendation on Ministry Policies; and

WHEREAS, the Recommendation on Ministry Policies are recognized as a means to develop and maintain a uniform standard and process for candidacy and call throughout this church while respecting the bound consciences of all; and

WHEREAS, the time has come for the issue of lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationships to be addressed scripturally once-and-for-all and resolved, and for this church to continue living together faithfully in the midst of disagreement; now,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, meeting in Assembly, memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly as follows:

1. To thank the members of Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality for their work.
2. To continue to honor the guidance of the Holy Spirit that has led this church over her history, where the Word of God, Creeds, and Lutheran Confessions make no generally recognized civil or ecclesial status that corresponds to heterosexual marriage for publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships.
3. Fully acknowledge those gifts and skills for ministry of all people, but believe that this church must maintain an expectation of celibacy for any gay or lesbian person.
4. To affirm and uphold the existing policy of Vision and Expectations, Article III, "Sexual Conduct" for all rostered leaders as person and example, and "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline," and the social statements of the Lutheran Church in America and The American Lutheran Church.
5. For the Conference of Bishops, and the Church Council to uphold the current policy regarding gay and lesbian rostered leaders, and the precluding of ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, and deaconesses in same-gender relationships.
6. To hold congregations and synods accountable to current policies regarding gay and lesbian rostered leaders.
7. And to therefore:
 - a. Reject the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and its implementing resolutions, as recommended by the ELCA Church Council; and
 - b. Reject the four parts of the proposed Recommendation on Ministry Policies, as recommended by the ELCA Church Council.