

Dear Bishop Mark Hanson, Bishop Jon Anderson, and all the leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America,

This letter comes to you out of my hesitance, my caution and my distraction with regards to recent ELCA decisions about leadership in the ELCA. I, the undersigned, have a variety of feelings about these decisions, but I do not feel strongly in one direction or another. I believe that those who do feel strongly one way or another all love their Church and are interpreting Scripture as faithfully as they know how, but that the same Church and many like me are caught, so to speak, in the crossfire.

I know that the Bible speaks negatively about homosexual practices. I also know that some scholars feel that those same passages do not speak to the current understanding of homosexual orientation. I believe that marriage should remain defined as being between a man and a woman; but at the same time I don't feel like I should tell others what to do with their relationships when I am not in their situations. I believe that we are all sinners, and that no one type of sin is any more or less sinful in God's eyes. I will follow the witness of both Testaments to welcome all of God's people and follow the advice of Jesus in John 8 that counsels the one who is without sin to cast the first stone. I will try to respect those who reach different conclusions when interpreting Scripture and try to maintain our unity in Christ despite disagreements.

I understand that the decisions made at the Churchwide Assembly will not force any congregation to call a pastor or rostered lay leader that they do not wish to call. I will continue to help my congregation form call committees when the need arises and to prayerfully consider candidates while holding the congregation's needs and desires in my heart. I understand that there are other congregations within our denomination who do wish to call or have no reservations about calling leaders who are a part of lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships. At the present time and for the foreseeable future, however, I do not expect that my congregation or likely any congregation in my area will desire to call such an individual.

I see how difficult this particular issue is for my friends and neighbors throughout the Church and within my congregation. Not only is this debate a scriptural one, but for many it is a deeply personal one. I am grieved at the damage and schism that has occurred and will continue to occur. I pray that we may all find healing and wholeness in the midst of difficult issues such as these, and that God's mission on earth for us will not unduly suffer as a result of this conflict.

I will continue to pray for the ELCA and all of its leaders. I am confident that God is always at work in our midst, even if we cannot see the outcome. I am saddened that this issue and others so easily polarize the body of Christ, and that those of us somewhere in the middle-ground feel pressured to choose one side or the other. I pray that I may follow Christ's example and teaching in all that I do.

In Christ,

A member of American Lutheran Church,
915 Winifred St.
Worthington, MN 56187