

RESOLUTION 11.04

REGARDING BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND RELATED VIOLENCE

WHEREAS, Scripture reminds us, *“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”* (1 Cor. 12:26); and

WHEREAS, In the *ELCA Social Statement on Education* (2007) we declared, *“The ELCA expects communities of learning and teaching to be safe places. We recognize that school safety is an issue for all students, staff, and teachers. Unfortunately, incidents of bullying, intimidation, and other forms of violence are not unusual. We affirm that personal safety and security are essential for optimal teaching and learning.”*; and

WHEREAS, Research indicates children with disabilities or special needs are at a higher risk of being bullied than others (Rigby, K., 2002, *New Perspective on Bullying*. London. Jessica Kingsley Publications), and has concluded that *Bullying around issues of sexual orientation, non-conforming gender behaviors, and dress was the most common form of bullying, second only to issues of appearance (e.g., body size and disability).*” (The National School Climate Survey, conducted in 2005); and

WHEREAS, In the *ELCA Social Statement on Sexuality, Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) we declared, *“Likewise, it will attend to the particular needs of children and the families of those with actual or perceived differences in sexual orientation or gender identity because they are especially vulnerable to verbal, physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and sexual abuse.”*; and

WHEREAS, Increased media attention has made us acutely aware of tragic consequences (including youth suicide) if steps are not taken to prevent bullying, harassment, and other related forms of violence; and

WHEREAS, The voice of the church addressing the intersection of race, economic status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical ability is a powerful witness to the healing and life-affirming Gospel promise; therefore be it

Resolved:

- 1. That** the members of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA encourage new partnerships among our congregations, the synods of the ELCA, the ELCA churchwide organization, Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, Lutheran Campus Ministry, colleges and universities, Lutheran School Associations, Lutherans Concerned/North America, Lutheran Social Services, public schools, counseling centers and other governmental organizations in order to support and offer preventative programs addressing bullying, harassment, and other related violence, especially with higher risk populations; and

- 2. That** these partnerships be encouraged to create or join with existing preventative programs which:
 - a. utilize positive, inclusive, empowering and developmentally appropriate materials,
 - b. raise participant's awareness about the issue,
 - c. focus on prevention,
 - d. seek to change bystander behavior into ally behavior,
 - e. create partnerships between youth and adults; and
- 3. That** the Southwestern Minnesota Synod memorializes the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to encourage, support, and publicize new partnerships in ministry that emerge in the ELCA addressing the prevention of bullying, harassment, and related forms of violence, especially with higher risk populations.

*Submitted by the Epiphany Council on behalf of
University Lutheran Church of the Epiphany and Lutheran Campus Ministry, Saint Cloud, MN*