

Resolution 13.06

Calling for Conversations about Ministering to Same-Gender Couples and Families

Whereas, The ELCA, meeting in Assembly (2009) resolved to “commit itself to finding ways to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize, support, and hold publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships;” and

Whereas, The ELCA Social Statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) states that:

1. “the ELCA recognizes that it has a pastoral responsibility to all children of God” (p. 19)
2. “supports legislation and policies to protect civil rights” for all and has also “called upon congregations and members of this church to welcome, care for, and support same-gender couples and their families and to **advocate for their legal protection**” (p. 19, emphasis added)
3. “will attend to the need for equal protection, equal opportunities, and equal responsibilities under the law” for all (p. 33); and

Whereas, Marriage has been recognized for same-gender couples in nine states and the District of Columbia and within the territory of twelve synods of the ELCA, which together minister to over 650,000 Lutherans (about 15% of total ELCA membership); and

Whereas, Seven additional states (Illinois, Minnesota, Delaware, Rhode Island, Hawaii, Oregon, and New Jersey) are expected to consider legislation recognizing marriage for same-gender couples between 2013 and 2015, encompassing twelve additional synods that minister to over 1.1 million Lutherans (about 25% of total ELCA membership); and

Whereas, The Supreme Court of the United States is currently considering whether to declare two laws unconstitutional: the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and California’s Proposition 8, both of which restrict the individual and family protections afforded by marriage; and

Whereas, Individuals, congregations, and pastors have requested advice and resources to assist in their mission to support same-gender couples and their families; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Southwestern Minnesota Synod memorialize the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to invite and encourage conversations among ELCA congregations, rostered leaders, and the Conference of Bishops regarding the growing trend in state and federal laws towards marriage equality and how all the expressions of the ELCA can respond to the needs of the neighbor. Discussions could include sharing of resources that would be helpful for those wishing to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals and couples and their families as we seek to grow into this reality; be it further

Resolved, That the Southwestern Minnesota Synod memorialize the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to invite and encourage conversations among ELCA congregations, rostered leaders, and the Conference of Bishops regarding ways that this church can advocate for equal protection under the law for same-gender couples and their families; be it further

Resolved, That the Southwestern Minnesota Synod memorialize the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to invite and encourage the ELCA Church Council and the churchwide organization to make provision for Voting Members to engage in these conversations at the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, as the church continues to discern its ministry in the emerging context.

Submitted by First Lutheran Church, St. Peter, MN Welcoming Committee Members: Ike Altmann, Paul Baumgartner, Alan Bray (Pastoral Representative), John Hall, Mary Hildebrandt, Marlys Johnson, Jan Jensen, Harvey Kane, Rachel Larson, Chuck Netzke, Mary Spear (Chair)

Adopted as presented at the 2013 Southwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly