

Resolution 07.05

Regarding the Practice of Blessing Same-Sex Unions

WHEREAS the 2005 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA voted to "respect the guidance of the 1993 Statement of the Conference of Bishops," which stated: "We, as the Conference of Bishops of the ELCA, recognize that there is basis neither in Scripture nor tradition for the establishment of an official ceremony by this church for the blessing of a homosexual relationship. We, therefore, do not approve such a ceremony as an official action of this church's ministry. Nevertheless, we express trust in and will continue dialogue with those pastors and congregations who are in ministry with gay and lesbian persons, and affirm their desire to explore the best ways to provide pastoral care for all to whom they minister" (CB93.10.25); and

WHEREAS our Southwestern Minnesota Synod Bishop, Jon Anderson, in his report following the 2005 Churchwide Assembly, assured the synod that we engaged in "hours of deep, faithful and (mostly) respectful conversation with one another about homosexuality. At the end of that discussion we [the Assembly] decided to maintain our current standards." Bishop Anderson further assured the synod that "after all the votes we decided to continue to respect and be guided by the '93 statement of the Conference of Bishops that there are 'no grounds in scripture or confessions for blessing same sex unions' while also entrusting to congregations and pastors the pastoral care of all people"¹; and

WHEREAS the Synod Council of the New England Synod of the ELCA has produced specific "Guidance for Pastors and Congregations of the New England Synod, ELCA, for the Blessing of Unions of Same-Sex Couples"² which provides specific instructions for how to conduct official ceremonies of blessing for same-sex unions, including: liturgical orders of worship for ELCA churches and the approval of ELCA pastors in serving as agents of the state for the blessing of homosexual unions;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly affirm with the Churchwide Assembly and with our own Synod Bishop that our synod will "maintain our current standards" and be "guided by the '93 statement of the Conference of Bishops" by not establishing, creating, or approving of "an official ceremony of this church for the blessing of a homosexual relationship" and by not authorizing its pastors to conduct such ceremonies "as an official action of this church's ministry"; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that pastors and congregations of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod continue to provide ministry and pastoral care to gay and lesbian persons, apart from the official or liturgical blessing of same-sex unions.

Submitted by the Church Council of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Maple Lake, MN 55358 – presented and approved for submission by unanimous consent on February 18, 2007

Original Author: Rev. Steven King, Senior Pastor

¹ *A letter to pastors including a Report on the 2005 Churchwide Assembly, Bishop Jon Anderson, SW MN Synod, August 17, 2005*

² *A Statement by the Synod Council of the New England Synod, ELCA, December 1, 2006*