



NORTHEASTERN IOWA SYNOD

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Office of the Bishop

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February 1, 2010

Dear Friends in Christ,

I am writing to share with you the decisions of our most recent synod council meeting. As you know, our council has been in a conversation about the August churchwide assembly actions on ministry policies and the social statement on human sexuality. Our conversations have been open and respectful. We have found ourselves disagreeing with one another but always seeking God's will for our synod.

In November, the synod council voted to state the "bound conscience" of our synod to uphold the traditional standards for ministry policies in our synod. We also voted to begin the process to "rescind" and "repudiate" the adoption of the social statement on human sexuality.

Our council received many responses to these actions. There were some who misinterpreted our actions as being defiant of the churchwide decision and even suggested that we had voted as a synod to leave the ELCA. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Other concerns were raised that the synod council had made decisions that placed the council as a higher authority than the local congregation. There was also the concern that the synod council had placed itself as a higher authority than the churchwide assembly.

Consequently, motions were made by members of the synod council to rescind the actions of the November synod council meeting. After extensive and open conversation, the motion to rescind the "bound conscience" resolution was adopted by a vote of 10 yes, 3 no and 1 abstention. The motion to rescind the previous action asking to "rescind" and "repudiate" the adoption of the social statement was adopted with 9 yes votes, 4 no votes and 1 abstention.

The conversations primarily centered on the issues of the authority of the synod council. Council members want to respect the authority of the local congregation as well as the authority of the churchwide assembly to adopt social statements. In addition, the synod council seeks to support the diversity of opinions that exists within the congregations of this synod. We want to support all of our congregations.

We ask you to be engaged in the conversation that our council has participated in over the past few months. We are convinced that the differences of opinion that exist in the synod council represent the disagreements among members of the congregations of our synod. Our hope and prayer is that each of us will see this as an opportunity to share our faith and the insights that grow out of it with one another. We trust that God will continue to bless our conversations as, together, we seek to faithfully respond to the decisions that were made at the 2009 churchwide assembly.

If you have any questions or wish to make your opinion known to the synod council about its actions, I invite you to write to me at dsmstrong@q.com or 655 7th St NE, Mason City, IA 50401. We value your opinions. We also desire to faithfully lead our synod during this challenging and important time in our life together.

With the Love of Christ,
Susan Armstrong
Vice-President, Northeastern Iowa Synod