



NORTHEASTERN IOWA SYNOD

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Office of the Bishop

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January 15, 2010

Ms. Carole Roth
3011 260th St.
Ventura IA 50482

Dear Ms. Roth,

Thank you for your letter of January 10, 2010. I wish to review the direct contacts that my office has had with your congregational leaders over the past several weeks.

We heard from a partner of Zion that the congregation had scheduled a congregational meeting to take a first vote to consider terminating its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Assistant to the Bishop Linda Hudgins responded by sending you the necessary information in order for Zion to have a vote that was in keeping with the constitutional requirements of the church. Even though this information had already been provided to your pastors and all pastors of our synod, we wanted to make sure that Zion's vote was in keeping with the requirements so that there could be no questioning of the results of the vote.

My office received a letter dated December 16, 2009 from Zion Congregation Council Recording Secretary Beth Ann Schumacher on December 18, 2009. In that letter she reported that the resolution to terminate Zion's relationship with the ELCA had received the necessary 2/3 majority. However, it was reported to us that the public report at the congregational meeting indicated that there was one spoiled ballot that was not included in determining the constitutionally required majority. Ms. Hudgins sent Beth Ann Schumacher a letter on December 18, 2009 informing her that the resolution did not meet the requirement. Neither Ms. Hudgins nor I have received any communication in response to that letter.

I received a letter from three partners of Zion questioning the vote. Subsequently, they have publicly shared their concern. Based on that letter, I wrote to you outlining why the resolution did not meet the required 2/3 majority. This is not a ruling on my part, simply a reporting of fact.

We have posted on our website the information about each congregation that is considering leaving the ELCA. The ELCA news service found the report on our website and wrote a news release. Media in your area picked up on the story. I imagine they did so since they had already reported the incomplete results of your congregational meeting.

I welcome conversation with you about this challenging situation. As you know, this is a matter between the congregation and ELCA. Consequently, it would be important for you as president and me as bishop to have an opportunity to meet. I would welcome other members of the council into the conversation.

May you know God's peace and power.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Steven Ullestad".

The Rev. Dr. Steven L. Ullestad
Bishop

cc: Pastor Dean Hess; Conference Deans, Chaplains and Correspondents; Synod Council;
David Swartling, ELCA Secretary; Pastor Rick Foss, Director of Contextual Learning,
Luther Seminary; John Brooks, ELCA News Service