

## **A Letter of Support, Care and Concern for Our Female Rostered Colleagues in Celebrating 50 Years of Faithful Ministry Alongside One Another**

*"In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."*

Galatians 3:26-27

*"Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many...If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it."*

1 Corinthians 12:14, 26

Partners in the Gospel,

In this 50th year since our first sister in Christ was ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament in the Lutheran Church in North America, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is right to give thanks, praise, and glory to God for the rich inheritance we all share through the Gospel, and for the unique, powerful and faithful witness and gifts for ministry that have been lovingly poured out by our female colleagues in Christ in every expression of this one church. This is truly cause for joy and celebration! Yet, for all the gifts and blessings that have been gained and shared through the faithfulness of clergy women over the past 50 years, it is clear that our journey of mutual growth, appreciation, and just and equitable treatment among rostered leaders continues to be a stumbling block in our life together. The Bible is clear that God created all of us in God's own image and that Jesus Christ commanded us to love each other. It's time we started acting that way.

That our siblings in Christ are treated as lesser, demeaned, bullied, and talked down to because of their gender grieves us deeply. It does not reflect well on the church or those in church leadership who believe their position gives them the right to act in paternalistic, patronizing, or just plain mean ways. Each of these colleagues, as the ordination rite boldly proclaims, "is a called and ordained minister of word and sacrament in the church of Christ...[who] has Christ's authority to preach the word of God and administer the sacraments, serving God's people as together we bear God's creative and redeeming love to all the world."

As male rostered leaders in the Northeastern Iowa Synod of the ELCA, we grieve the bias and discrimination our female rostered colleagues continue to face. We are pained, saddened and angered as we continue to learn of the difficulties and poor treatment some of our women clergy colleagues have faced, and continue to face, as they engage in ministry. Discrimination toward our female colleagues routinely arises in call processes where call committees and their congregations refuse to interview and extend calls to otherwise qualified female candidates and/or subject our female colleagues to questions and comments related to family circumstances,

personal appearance, and temperament that are rarely, if ever, directed toward their male counterparts. We see such discriminatory and biased treatment continue within congregational settings where our female colleagues often fail to receive wages, benefits, and raises commensurate with similarly qualified male colleagues and/or are treated with suspicion or bias when requesting family/maternity leave.

As male rostered leaders in this Synod, we stand with our female rostered colleagues. Period. We value their voices, their contributions, their abilities, and their gifts. The past 50 years have unequivocally demonstrated that our church is better and our witness stronger because of women in rostered ministry. We honor and respect our female colleagues. We expect congregations to do the same.

Much as Esther was once urged by Mordecai to use her unique position of influence "For such a time as this," we pledge to walk alongside our sisters in Christ and stand together with them, exerting the influence, privilege and power we have to eradicate the sexist abuses they suffer. Together, with our female colleagues, we call on all the baptized people of God of this Synod to take immediate and focused steps to remove the systemic sexism that is damaging not only to the women who face this abuse, but to this Synod and this Church. With God's help, we pledge the following:

1. To celebrate and lift up the ministry of female rostered leaders among us by various means including ELCA materials such as *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action*; *We are Church, We are Called: 50/40/10*; etc.
2. To actively listen to the voices of those who have been recipients and victims of sexist comments, bias, and mistreatment in any form.
3. To publicly call out sexism within and without the church, as the sin that it is.
4. To directly challenge sexist behavior as it appears in our lives and in our congregations.
5. To work to develop and implement an intentional and public plan to end sexist injustices, particularly those that are manifested in the compensation and benefit practices and the call process, as developed under the leadership of the Bishop and Synod Council.
6. To strongly encourage the congregations and organizations of this Synod to unite in setting aside and dedicating one Sunday as a day of confession and forgiveness in regard to the sin of sexism, and to renew their commitment to justice and equity.

May we actively fulfill the promises made by the church to each of our sibling servants at their ordination, to "regard them as servants of Christ; pray for them; help and honor them for their work's sake, and in all things strive to live together in the peace and unity of Christ."

Signed:

Rev. Paul Amlin, Lord of Life  
Lutheran, Asbury

Rev. Mark Anderson, Northeastern  
Iowa Synod staff, Waverly

Rev. Michael Ashman, St. John & St.  
Paul, Guttenberg

Rev. Randall V. Baldwin, One in  
Christ Lutheran Parish, Lake Mills

Rev. Kyle B. Barton, St. James  
Lutheran, Allison

Rev. Joel Becker St. Peter, Oran and  
Buck Creek, Sumner

Rev. Brian Beckstrom, Wartburg  
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Rev. Dr. Arthur C. Bergren, St. Paul's  
Lutheran, Waverly

Rev. Jeff Blank, Trinity American  
Lutheran, Bennington

Rev. Mike Blair, Chaplain, Bartels  
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Rev. Kurt Bockoven, Big  
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Rev. Steve Brackett, Northeastern  
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Rev. Mark Brandt, Lutheran Church  
of Hope Local, Clear Lake

Rev. Roger Buhr, Retired

Rev. David Burling, Bethany Life,  
Story City

Rev. Nathan Clements, American  
Lutheran, La Porte City

Rev. Greg DeBoer, Immanuel  
Lutheran, Independence

Rev. Bob Ericson, Nazareth Lutheran,  
Cedar Falls

Rev. Daniel Flucke, St. Peter  
Lutheran, Greene

Rev. Kevin Frey, Trinity Lutheran,  
New Hampton

Rev. Vince Fricke, retired

Rev. John W Gannett, retired

Rev. Jim Gardner, retired

Rev. Dan Gerrietts, Trinity, Mason  
City

Rev. Robert C. Gremmels, retired

Rev. Daniel Hanson, St. Paul and St.  
John's Lutheran Churches, Hampton

Rev. Dennis Hanson, Nazareth  
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Rev. Gary Heidt-Johnson, Zion  
Lutheran, Waterloo

Rev. Jay R. Ilten, St Johns Lutheran,  
Dubuque

Rev. Jeffrey Jacobs, St. Paul  
Lutheran, Lime Springs

Rev. Gary L. Johnson, retired

Rev. Kevin Jones, Trinity Lutheran,  
Mason City

Rev. Tom Jones. retired

Rev. Brian Julin-McCleary, St. John  
Lutheran, Cedar Falls

Rev. Brian King, Nazareth Lutheran,  
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Rev. James Knudson, retired

Rev. Peter R. Kowitz, Decorah  
Lutheran Church, Decorah

Rev. Dave L. Lenth, Ossian Lutheran  
Church, Ossian

Rev. Jim Magelssen, retired

Rev. Tom Martin, Kensett Lutheran  
Parish, Kensett

Rev. Jim Martin-Schramm, Luther  
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Rev. Josh Martyn, Holy Trinity,  
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Rev. Dan Mixdorf, retired

Rev. Matthew Muters, Our Savior's  
Lutheran, Mason City

Rev. Dennis Niezwaag, Grace  
Lutheran, Tripoli

Rev. Bryan Odeen, Our Savior's  
Lutheran, Osage

Rev. Phillip Olson, retired

Rev. Bill Peters, One in Christ  
Lutheran Parish, Lake Mills

Rev. Bryan Robertson, St. John's  
Lutheran, Waukon

Rev. Derek Rosentiel, Holy Trinity  
Lutheran, Dubuque

Rev. John Sheahan, Bergen Lutheran,  
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Rev. Michael Sherer, retired

Rev. Corey Smith, Redeemer  
Lutheran, Waverly

Rev. Kim W. Smith, Faith Lutheran,  
Shell Rock

Rev. Dr. Rolf Svanoë, retired

Rev. G. Kim Wells, Zion St. John  
Lutheran, Sheffield

Rev. David A. Werges, Cross Roads  
Lutheran Parish, Osage

Rev. Grant Woodley, First Lutheran,  
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