

# 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly

## Decisions Regarding Sexuality

### Social Statement

*ELCA Churchwide Assembly took these actions on August 19, 2009*

■ The ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted a social statement on human sexuality called “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust.” The social statement was approved by exactly the two-thirds majority required for adoption 66.67% (676-338). The social statement changed ELCA teaching to allow for the possibility of same-sex relationships being considered similar to heterosexual marriage.

■ The assembly specifically rejected a proposal to retain the church’s previous teaching on homosexual behavior as a part of the social statement. Instead, the statement describes various positions ELCA members take on homosexual behavior without offering any clear biblical teaching on the topic.

■ The assembly refused to consider changes to the statement to retain the church’s previous teaching that marriage was ordained by God as a structure of creation. Instead, the statement defines marriage in terms of trusting relationships.

■ The social statement notes that same-sex marriage differs from the historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions: “Recognizing that this conclusion differs from the historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions, some people, though not all, in this church and within the larger Christian community, conclude that marriage is also the appropriate term to use in describing similar benefits, protection, and support for same-gender couples entering into lifelong, monogamous relationships.”

### Policy Changes Regarding Same-Sex Unions and Ministry Standards

*ELCA Churchwide Assembly took action on August 21, 2009*

■ The ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted to permit congregations to recognize same-sex unions 619-402 (60.6%). The resolution specifically was “to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize, support and hold publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships.”

■ The ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted to change ministry standards to allow pastors to be in same-sex relationships 559-451 (55.3%). The resolution specifically was “that the ELCA commit itself to finding a way for people in such publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church.”

■ The assembly also approved resolutions detailing the changes to church policy and practice necessary to implement these changes and “that in the implementation of any resolutions on ministry policies, the ELCA commit itself to bear one another’s burdens, love the neighbor, and respect the bound consciences of all.”

■ The official changes in ELCA standards for pastors and other rostered leaders regarding same-sex sexual relationships were made by the ELCA Church Council on April 10, 2010. (See separate document noting those changes.)