

To: ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Members

From: Hispanics Pastors of the ELCA – July 2009

Re: Decisions facing the Churchwide Assembly

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with deep regret that we have seen that the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly will be considering a proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality which would significantly change the historical teaching and practice of the Church on sexuality. Also being considered is a proposal which would change our current ministry standards to allow non-celibate homosexual pastors, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses to serve as rostered leaders in the ELCA.

Since many Pastors and members of Hispanic Congregations are extremely concerned with the vote taking place in Minneapolis in August, we are writing to let you know of our opposition to both the proposed Social Statement and to making any changes to the current rostering standards of the ELCA for the following reasons:

1. We were ordained to be Ministers of the ELCA. The Confession of Faith, as recorded in the Constitution of the ELCA, Chapter 2.03, states that the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as the inspired Word of God, are the authoritative source and norm of our faith, life, and conduct, and it is crystal clear that the Bible calls homosexual behavior contrary to the Word and Will of God.
2. As Lutherans, we agree that salvation is by Grace - through Faith only. All of humankind is equally and inherently alienated from God and are forgiven and saved by the Grace of God, and only by the Grace of God. However, this forgiveness calls for repentance.
3. We believe that the Church should be a place of worship where everyone should be welcomed. In our Congregations, we welcome people of all sexual orientations. We believe, however, that homosexual behavior (and any other unbiblical sexual behavior) should be regarded as behavior not in accordance with the Will of God.
4. When the Assembly votes on these matters, your vote will not simply decide on possible changes to ELCA policies but will also be a vote on whether or not Holy Scripture will be the final authority for our faith and life in the ELCA.
5. Homosexual behavior is not a race or a condition but is portrayed in Scripture as a behavior, a behavior which is not in accord with the will of the Creator. Those who repent will receive our Lord's forgiveness and the power of the Holy Spirit to change their behavior and to walk according to His Will and ways.
6. This issue has caused, as well as revealed, great divisions in our Church. Many Pastors and

members have already left us and many will leave us in the near future if this Statement and these rostering changes are approved. A wonderful Church like ours will be further divided and our unity further undermined, if not destroyed.

Being deeply concerned about the future of our Church, we respectfully request that, for the sake of the Word of God and for the unity of the ELCA, your vote may honor the Biblical, historical, confessional, and traditional teachings of the Church regarding sexuality, marriage, family, and the rostering of our ministry leaders.

Please vote NO on the Social Statement and against any changes to our Rostering policies.

May God guide you to do what it is right in His sight.

SIGNATORIES:

Rev. Giacomo Cassese, PhD., Hope, Miami, FL
Rev. Bishop Edelmiro Cortes (Caribbean Synod, ret.), St. Cloud, FL
Rev. Remedios Cruz, Jesus Rey de Gloria, Hialeah, FL
Rev. Gilberto Falcon, Plymouth, FL
Mrs. Eva Gallardo, AIM, Principe de Paz, Miami, FL
Rev. Lenier Gallardo, D.Min., Principe de Paz, Miami, FL
Rev. Esteban Mesa, Monte de Sion, Hialeah, FL
Rev. Eliezer Ortiz, Lord of Life, Miami, FL
Rev. Eddy Perez, MD, San Pedro, Miami, FL
Rev. Sergio Ramos, Prince of Peace, Margate, FL