

Evangelical Lutheran Synod disagrees with homosexual clergy resolution adopted by ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)

MANKATO, MINNESOTA—Officials of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), a church body based in Mankato, noted with concern and disappointment the decision of the national convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), held in Minneapolis August 17-23, to allow the ordination of practicing homosexuals and lesbians as pastors of the church.

The smaller ELS is not affiliated with the larger ELCA, even though the names of the two churches are very similar.

ELS President, Rev. John A. Moldstad, said: “Ordaining practicing homosexuals and lesbians to the ministry is a serious departure from the biblical standards of morality to which Lutherans and Lutheran pastors have historically been held.” Moldstad clarified that, in contrast to the newly-adopted position of the ELCA, the position of the ELS on the matter of homosexuality and marriage is as follows:

We confess that Scripture condemns homosexuality and extra-marital relations (fornication and adultery) as sin. Nevertheless, when an individual caught up in such sins truly repents, the forgiveness of the Gospel is to be fully applied. We confess that the divine institution of marriage is to be heterosexual, in which, according to God’s design, a man and a woman may enjoy a life-long companionship in mutual love. We teach on the basis of Holy Scripture that marriage is the only proper context for the expression of sexual intimacy and for the procreation of children. See Rom. 1:26-27, 1 Cor. 6:9, 18 and 7:2-9, John 4:17-18, 1 John 1:9, Gen. 1:27-28 and 2:18-24, Matt. 19:4-6. (From *We Believe, Teach, and Confess*, adopted by the ELS in 1992)

Moldstad explained that ELS churches welcome into their midst those who may struggle with temptation toward a same-sex attraction, but who know in their conscience that this is wrong, and who seek God’s help in their struggle. Said Moldstad, “The ELS believes that in this world it is the duty of the church – as the body of Christ – to be a community of healing and reconciliation in the Gospel, and a beacon of hope to all humanity. And so, while the church is indeed called by the Lord to condemn as sin that which God condemns as sin, it is the church’s privilege also to offer and apply the grace, forgiveness, and acceptance of God, in Jesus Christ, to all who repent of their sins – whatever those sins may be.”

In addition to the similarity in names, the ELS shares a common heritage with some segments of the ELCA. The Mankato-based group was organized in 1918 by pastors and congregations that had declined to enter a merger that formed one of the predecessor bodies of the ELCA. The ELS has not participated in subsequent Lutheran mergers either – including the one that formed the ELCA in 1988 – because of what it saw as doctrinal compromises that these mergers represented.

President Moldstad may be contacted at the synod office in Mankato, by telephone (507-344-7354) or by email (elsynod@blc.edu). The synod’s web site is evangelicallutheransynod.org

[To be added in the introduction of the news release sent to our pastors: An additional paragraph about the local ELS congregation or congregations, with contact information, may be added here.]