

Lutherans in Faith Together



20<sup>th</sup> Annual Synod Assembly  
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA  
June 8, 2007  
First Presbyterian Church, Bethlehem, Pa.

## Resolutions Submitted to the 2007 Synod Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

The following resolution was received from Pr. Grace Olson and the members of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Gay and Lesbian Ministry Task Force, and from Pr. Roxanne Kringle and twelve members of St. John, Farmersville.

### **1. A MEMORIAL TO RESPOND TO THE DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINE HEARING COMMITTEE**

WHEREAS, the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly urged every part of the ELCA to “concentrate on finding ways to live together faithfully in the midst of disagreements, recognizing the God-given mission and communion that we share as members of the body of Christ”; and

WHEREAS, the discipline hearing committee constituted to consider charges against Pr. Bradley E. Schmeling suggested that synod assemblies memorialize the 2007 Churchwide Assembly to request that the Committee on Appeals reconsider and revise the document *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline* and that the appropriate churchwide unit reconsider and revise the document *Vision and Expectations* and the policy on reinstatement to the rosters of this church (Decision of the Discipline Hearing Committee, p. 13); and

WHEREAS, if permitted to decide the case only under the standards in chapters 7 and 20 of the ELCA Constitution, the discipline hearing committee “would find almost unanimously that Pastor Schmeling is not engaged in conduct that is incompatible with the ministerial office, and would find with near unanimity that no discipline of any sort should be imposed against him” (Decision of the Discipline Hearing Committee, p. 12); and

WHEREAS, *Definitions and Guidelines* may be amended by the Committee on Appeals, subject to approval by the Church Council, while *Vision and Expectations* and the policy on reinstatement to the rosters of the church may be amended by the Vocation and Education unit, with review by the Conference of Bishops and adoption by the Church Council (in accordance with ELCA bylaws 7.31.11., 7.31.13.f., 7.31.15., 7.51.03.b., 7.52.13., 20.71.11., and 20.71.12. and continuing resolution 16.12.C05.d.2); and

WHEREAS, the Churchwide Assembly, as the highest legislative authority of the ELCA, can “request or direct” that the steps be taken for the development by the Committee on Appeals and adoption by the Church Council of an amendment to *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*; and for the development by the appropriate churchwide unit,

review by the Conference of Bishops, and adoption by the Church Council of an amendment to *Vision and Expectations* (ELCA Church Council, Minutes of April 9-11, 2006, p. 90, explanation by Secretary Almen): now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to:

1. *direct the Committee on Appeals to develop an amendment to the definitions and guidelines established under ELCA bylaws 20.71.11. and 20.71.12. that removes provisions precluding "practicing homosexual persons" from the rosters of this church;*
2. *direct the Vocation and Education unit, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, to develop an amendment to the policies established under ELCA bylaws 7.31.11., 7.31.13., and 7.51.03.b. that removes provisions requiring persons who are "homosexual in their self-understanding" to "abstain from homosexual sexual relationships";*
3. *direct the Vocation and Education unit, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, to develop an amendment to the policies established under ELCA bylaws 7.31.15. and 7.52.13. that permits the reinstatement to the rosters of this church, without the usual requirement of five consecutive years without call, of persons who have resigned or been removed from the rosters solely because they are in a mutual, chaste, and faithful committed same-gender relationship; and*
4. *direct the Church Council to take the necessary steps to amend the definitions and guidelines established under bylaws 20.71.11. and 20.71.12., the policies established under bylaws 7.31.11., 7.31.13., and 7.51.03.b., and the policies established under bylaws 7.31.15. and 7.52.13. in conformity to the preceding directions to the Committee on Appeals and Vocation and Education unit.*

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The following resolution was received from Pr. Grace Olson and the members of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Gay and Lesbian Ministry Task Force, and from Pr. Roxanne Kringle and twelve members of St. John, Farmersville.

## **2. A MEMORIAL TO ENCOURAGE REFRAINING FROM DISCIPLINE**

WHEREAS, there is currently no consensus in this church regarding the rostered service of persons in committed same-gender relationships (Report of the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality, p. 5); and

WHEREAS, the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly urged every part of the ELCA to "concentrate on finding ways to live together faithfully in the midst of disagreements, recognizing the God-given mission and communion that we share as members of the body of Christ": now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to adopt the following resolution:

*RESOLVED, that in order to live together faithfully in the midst of disagreements, synods, synodical bishops, and the Presiding Bishop of this church are*

*encouraged to refrain from disciplining those who – in good conscience and for the sake of outreach, ministry, and commitment to continuing dialogue – call, approve, ordain, commission, or consecrate otherwise-qualified candidates for rostered service who are in a mutual, chaste, and faithful committed same-gender relationship; and be it further*

*RESOLVED, that synods, synodical bishops, and the Presiding Bishop of this church are encouraged to refrain from disciplining those rostered leaders in a mutual, chaste, and faithful committed same-gender relationship who have been thus called, approved, ordained, commissioned, or consecrated.*

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The following resolution was received from Pr. Grace Olson and the members of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Gay and Lesbian Ministry Task Force, and from Pr. Roxanne Kringle and twelve members of St. John, Farmersville.

### **3. A MEMORIAL TO ENDORSE RESTRAINT**

WHEREAS, there is currently no consensus in this church regarding the rostered service of persons in committed same-gender relationships (Report of the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality, p. 5); and

WHEREAS, the ELCA policy documents *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline and Vision and Expectations* are separate from the ELCA Constitution and pertain to rostered service in the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly urged every part of the ELCA to “concentrate on finding ways to live together faithfully in the midst of disagreements, recognizing the God-given mission and communion that we share as members of the body of Christ”: now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to adopt the following resolution:

*RESOLVED, that the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA endorses and calls for restraint in the application of provisions relating to the rostered service of persons who, in policies separate from the ELCA Constitution, are referred to as “practicing homosexuals” or as “homosexual in their self-understanding.”*

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The following resolution was received from Joshua Buzzard, St. Michael, Hamburg.

### **4. A RESOLUTION TO WAIT FOR SOCIAL STATEMENT IN 2009**

WHEREAS, the ELCA concluded an exhausting four-year study and debate over ordination of non-celibate homosexual persons at its 2005 Churchwide Assembly in Orlando by declining to change current policies; and

WHEREAS, the continuing conflict over this matter is divisive and distracting from the mission of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, the task force on sexuality is scheduled to present a social statement on sexuality to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the disciplinary case of Pr. Bradley Schmeling in the Southeastern Synod has been used as a pretext for reopening this question; and

WHEREAS, the Schmeling disciplinary committee heard no evidence supporting the current guidelines and exceeded its authority by improperly recommending that this year's synod assemblies seek to overturn the decisions made at Orlando; Therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly at Chicago not to reopen the issue of ordination of non-celibate homosexual persons before the report of the Task Force is received in 2009.