

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.ILCfamily.org

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9 am Traditional Worship*—10:10 am Sunday School—11:10 Contemporary Worship

Broadcast: KOPY AM 1070* The Rev. Kathleen G. Kasper, Pastor

Date: April 26, 2009

To: The Voting Members of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly

From: The Members of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Alice, Texas

Re: The Decisions before You Concerning Same-Gender Relationships

Dear Voting Members,

In August, as you gather in Minneapolis for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly, you will have many decisions to make. Some of those decisions will be relatively easy to make, others will not be easy at all.

For the better part of 15 years, the ELCA has discussed how it can best respond to those members of the ELCA who understand themselves to be homosexual. The discussions of the church body have been long and arduous. Churchwide Assemblies of previous years have prayerfully entered into this debate and decisions have been thoughtfully and prayerfully made.

Regarding the ordination of those who desire to serve this church body and who understand themselves to be homosexual, the voting members of this church body have consistently voted that these persons are to remain celibate. The document *Visions and Expectations* outlines the specifics.

We, the members of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Alice, Texas urge you as a Voting Member at this year's Assembly to keep the requirement of celibacy in place for all who understand themselves to be homosexual. We believe strongly that the homosexual lifestyle is not in keeping with the clear Word of God. We believe that Jesus answered the question of homosexual relationships at the same time that he answered the question put to him concerning divorce.

Some Pharisees came to Jesus to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Matthew 19:3-6

Know Christ

Live Christ

Share Christ

The only union ordained by our loving God is the union between a man and a woman. It is this union which He has blessed and said “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.” Every human being is the joining of a sperm and an egg; therefore, God’s own creative design for the human being is a witness to the only sexual union God has ordained and blessed.

Though our culture and every human agency within it may tell us otherwise, as followers of Christ, we have got to base our decisions on God’s Word and not on what our culture or its human agencies tell us. We are the ones called to be “salt and light” in the world. The Church in its witness to the One True God is to be counter-cultural.

Does God love homosexuals? Yes! Does God condone the lifestyle? No! Does God love sinners no matter what the sin may be? Yes! Does God condone sin? No! He hates it. Our sins sent God’s Son to the cross and not for the purpose of allowing us to remain in them.

Hard as it will be for some to accept, the ELCA needs to remain steadfast in prohibiting non-celibate homosexuals from becoming rostered in any capacity of this church body. This is the most loving action we can take. If we do otherwise and make allowances to roster non-celibate homosexuals, we may very well hear our God giving a verdict similar to the one Jesus gave to the Pharisees who asked him the question about divorce, “*Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.*”

Using the same course of reasoning already covered above, we also cannot condone or encourage the ELCA to adopt a Social Statement which allows persons who understand themselves to be homosexual to live out this lifestyle in any fashion.

It is our hope that the ELCA will become greater and more vocal advocates of God’s ability to transform sinners no matter what the sin may be. It is also our hope that the ELCA will become greater advocates of ministries such as ‘EXODUS International,’ ‘Love Won Out’ and others, already available throughout the Church, which have helped many come out of this lifestyle.

The burden of being a Voting Member at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly is a great one. Please know that you are, and will be, in our prayers.

God be with you as you do His Work,
The Members of Immanuel Lutheran Church
Alice, Texas

Sheryl Wallgren
Congregation Council President

The Rev. Kathleen G. Kasper
Pastor