

Recommendation on Ministry Policies
From the ELCA Church Council to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly

Background:

The Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies was requested by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly, which asked that the Task Force for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality “address and make recommendations on changes to any policies that preclude practicing homosexual persons from the rosters of this church” [CA07.06.27]. The document was released by the task force in February 2009 along with the proposed social statement, “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” which was requested by the 2001 Churchwide Assembly.

Church Council Action:

To transmit the following actions to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly:

1. **RESOLVED, that the ELCA commit itself to finding ways to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize, support, and hold publicly accountable life-long, monogamous, same-gender relationships.**
2. **RESOLVED, 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.**
3. **RESOLVED, that, in the implementation of these resolutions, the ELCA commit itself to bear one another’s burdens, love the neighbor, and respect the bound consciences of all.**
4. Whereas, guided by the Holy Spirit, this church raises up, calls, supports, and maintains rosters of ordained ministers, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers for public ministry in service of the mission of Christ and seeks faithfully to discern in each situation what will best serve that mission; and
Whereas, this church maintains these four rosters according to policies and procedures that are developed and applied according to the specifications of chapters 7 and 20 of its Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions; and
Whereas, this church has a polity, processes, and procedures that trust designated individuals and bodies to use churchwide standards to make decisions about fitness for rostered ministry in general and for call to a specific ELCA ministry; and
Whereas, some members, congregations, candidacy committees, and synods of the ELCA have discerned gifts and skills for rostered ministry in some people who are or contemplate being in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships and have indicated their conviction that rostering and calling such people would serve the mission and ministry of this church; and
Whereas, other members, congregations, candidacy committees, and synods of the ELCA acknowledge those gifts and skills for ministry, but believe that this church must maintain an expectation of celibacy for any gay or lesbian person, whether or not that person is in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship, and thus believe that this church cannot call or roster people in such relationships; and
Whereas, the Church of Christ sometimes has been surprised by the actions of the Spirit, as is reported in the book of Acts when the inclusion of Gentiles was affirmed; and

49 Whereas, public accountability of rostered leaders in the ELCA is essential to nurturing the
50 trust that is necessary for effective ministry; and

51 Whereas, although there is no generally recognized civil or ecclesial status that corresponds
52 to heterosexual marriage for publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender
53 relationships, this assembly has committed itself to find ways to recognize, support, and hold
54 publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships; and

55 Whereas, present ELCA policies prohibit the rostered service of any and all people in
56 publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships, but this assembly has
57 committed itself to find a way for people in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-
58 gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church; therefore, be it

59 **RESOLVED, that Evangelical Lutheran Church in America call upon its members to**
60 **commit themselves to respect the bound consciences of those with whom they disagree**
61 **regarding decisions on the call and rostering of individuals in publicly accountable,**
62 **lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships, in this church and with churches**
63 **ecumenically and globally; and be it further**

64 **RESOLVED, that this church, because of its commitment to respect the bound**
65 **consciences of all, declare its intent to allow structured flexibility in decision-making**
66 **regarding the approving or disapproving in candidacy and the extending or not extending**
67 **of a call to rostered service of a person who is otherwise qualified and who is living or**
68 **contemplates living in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender**
69 **relationship; and be it further**

70 **RESOLVED, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America make provision in its**
71 **policies to eliminate the prohibition of rostered service by members who are in publicly**
72 **accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships; and be it further**

73 **RESOLVED, that the appropriate churchwide unit(s) be directed to develop, in**
74 **consultation with the Conference of Bishops, and the Church Council be directed to**
75 **approve, appropriate guidelines for a process by which congregations, synods, and the**
76 **churchwide organization could hold people publicly accountable in their relationships who**
77 **are in or contemplate being in lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships and who**
78 **seek to be on the rosters of this church; and be it further**

79 **RESOLVED, that the Committee on Appeals be directed to develop, in consultation**
80 **with the Conference of Bishops, and the Church Council be directed to approve,**
81 **appropriate amendments to “Definition and Guidelines for Discipline” and the Vocation**
82 **and Education program unit be directed to draft, in consultation with the Conference of**
83 **Bishops, and the Church Council be directed to approve, appropriate amendments to the**
84 **“Vision and Expectations” documents and the Candidacy Manual to accomplish the intent**
85 **of this resolution; and be it further**

86 **RESOLVED, that additional policies be developed, as necessary, so that those whom**
87 **this church holds responsible for making decisions about fitness for rostered ministry in**
88 **general and for call to a particular specific ELCA ministry may discern, and have guidance**
89 **in discerning, the fitness for ministry of a member living in a publicly accountable, lifelong,**
90 **monogamous, same-gender relationship; and be it finally**

91 **RESOLVED, that this church continue to trust its established processes and those to**
92 **whom it has given the responsibility to discern who should and should not be rostered or**
93 **called to public ministry in this church.**

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