



**EASTERN SYNOD** of the  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada**

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Dear Synod family

Grace and peace be unto you!

As I write this letter, we are just concluding the Thirteenth Biennial Convention in Saskatoon.

In the coming weeks, your delegates will provide you with their individual reports on our total convention experience. I do, however, wish to communicate with you regarding the following two resolutions which were approved by the convention after much spirited debate and discussion.

*It is the policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada that rostered ministers may, according to the dictates of their consciences as informed by the Gospels, the Scriptures, the ecumenical creeds and the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, preside at or bless legal marriages according to the laws of the province within which they serve. All rostered ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada are encouraged to exercise due diligence in preparing couples for marriage. All rostered ministers serving congregations are encouraged at all times to conduct their ministry in consultation with the lay leaders in the congregation and with sensitivity to the culture within which the congregation serves.*

*It is the policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada that sexual orientation is not in itself a factor which disqualifies a candidate for rostered ministry or a rostered minister seeking a call. Candidates and rostered ministers are in all cases expected to adhere to the qualifications and standards as set out in the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and of the synod within which they serve. Synods and congregations are expected to evaluate candidates for ordination or consecration and rostered ministers for call in accordance with a conscience informed by the Gospels, the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.*

These actions are, of course, quite controversial and will be received with both happiness and distress by individual members of our synod family. While I am mindful of this reality, I am very supportive of the decisions that have been made. In my view, they represent a reasonable accommodation that allows for a diversity of pastoral practice.

Those congregations who wish to offer prayerful support to persons in committed same-gender partnerships will now have a responsible means of doing so. At the same time, this resolution protects the rights of pastors and congregations who do not wish to be partnered in actions that they cannot, in good conscience, support.

As pastors and congregations receive this news and consider if or how they may respond to these conventions actions, I hope that we may all be mindful that this is a time which calls not for precipitous reaction, but for careful, discerning, and prayerful consideration of how we might move forward as a church in light of these actions.

Even as the national convention undertook these actions, they also passed the motion, specifically affirming our continued unity in Christ. Even in the face of deep differences, regarding these issues, there is a desire to continue conversations and support of one another.

Accompanying this letter is a set of guidelines regarding the implementation of these motions. At the same time, I encourage both pastors and congregations to be both mindful and supportive of those who, in good conscience, continue to hold differing viewpoints on these issues.

Finally, I would advise congregations and pastors wishing to exercise any of the options made possible by these resolutions to do so with prudent regard for their context. I would also welcome conversation as we learn, together, both how to sensitively implement the consequence of these resolutions and to support the rights of congregations and pastors to refrain from such actions.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

May God grant each of you a blessed and restorative summer season!

With all Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Michael". The plus sign is to the left of the name, and the name is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MJP:cd