



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

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Dear Synod family

Grace and peace be unto you!

I write this letter as a follow-up to my July 16, 2011 post ELCIC convention pastoral letter. In recent weeks my office has received several inquiries from pastors and congregations asking for advice on how to proceed in light of the convention actions concerning ministry with persons in same-gendered relationships.

In each instance I have cautioned pastors and congregations from determining congregational policies until such time as they have engaged in a full and comprehensive programme of parish education and conversation over the course of at least several months.

Some pastors and congregations feel that the convention actions compel them to immediately make decisions for their local ministries. I do not hold a similar view. Indeed, I believe that it is both unwise and potentially harmful for pastors and congregations to articulate policy positions without having first engaged in an extended time of prayerful reflection and discernment.

Some –a very few – of our congregations have already done this and have been engaged in such a process for several years. They, quite rightly, see themselves as being in a position to take some kind of formal action. Most of our congregations, however, have done very little in this regard. For pastors or congregational leaders to encourage action without having done such work would, in my view, be less than responsible regardless of the positions being espoused.

In order to assist pastoral and congregational leaders to explore these questions further, a Caring Conversations 7 event will be offered by the Kitchener/Waterloo Conference on Saturday, November 5, at Mount Zion Lutheran Church, Waterloo. Each congregation is invited to send a team of 4-6 people and to register as a group. Please set the date aside now, get registered, and pass the word!

CC 7 is the seventh Caring Conversations event hosted by the Kitchener/Waterloo Conference. Details of earlier events and related materials can be accessed on the website of Trinity Church, New Hamburg: [www.telc.ca](http://www.telc.ca). Click on “Caring Conversations”.

At CC 7 we will explore next steps:

- What do we do now?
- What do we do as pastors?
- What do we do as congregational leaders?
- What is appropriate to our local context?

CC 7 will be especially helpful to pastors, council members and those congregational leaders charged with reflecting upon the policies of the church as they apply to local congregations. This invitation is being extended to people in the Kitchener/Waterloo Conference and four neighbouring conferences -Toronto, Hamilton/Niagara, London and Georgian Bay. Of course, others are most welcome and if unable to come are encouraged to consider hosting a similar forum for conversation and learning in their particular setting! Please contact me should you like some assistance in doing so.

In conclusion, I would remind us all that even as the national convention undertook these actions, they also passed a motion specifically affirming our continued unity in Christ. Even in the face of deep differences, we need to work at affirming and building up that unity, continuing to talk, pray and support one another regardless of the individual positions we might hold at this time.

Thank you for your attention to this letter. You remain, as always, in my thoughts and prayers.

May God grant each of you a blessed Thanksgiving!

With all Best Wishes,

+  Michael

MJP:cd