



EASTERN SYNOD
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

74 Weber Street West
Kitchener, ON N2H 3Z3

Telephone: (519) 743-1461
Fax: (519) 743-4291
Toll Free: 1-877-373-5242
E-mail: easternsynod@elcic.ca

Memo

Date: March 15, 2004
To: Eastern Synod Pastors & Congregations
From: Bishop Michael J. Pryse
Subject: **Synod Council Recommendations**

Synod Council Recommendations
March 11-13, 2004

1. Regarding the Affirmation of Welcome Motion

During their March 11-13, 2004 meeting, the Eastern Synod Council devoted considerable time to preparing a recommendation concerning the Affirmation of Welcome motion, which will be considered at Synod Assembly 2004.

In their deliberations, the council considered recommending the following options.

- adoption of the motion as forwarded by Synod Assembly 2002.
- defeat of the motion as forwarded by Synod Assembly 2002.
- that no action be taken on this resolution.
- adoption of an alternate statement of welcome.
- adoption of a substitute motion(s).

Synod Council's deliberation concluded with the unanimous adoption of a series of three motions that will be presented as a substitute to the motion forwarded by Synod Assembly 2002. Those motions read as follows:

That, within the context of our church's constitutions and enactments, the Eastern Synod affirm the principle that all persons are welcome to full participation in the organizational and sacramental life of this church regardless of race, ancestry, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, age, record of offences, marital status, sexual orientation, economic status, family status, or disability.

and

That Eastern Synod congregations and specialized ministries be encouraged to examine their policies and practices and work toward embodying this principle in all aspects of their respective ministries.

and

That the Eastern Synod reaffirm its call for Canadians, both individually and in their public institutions, to respect the rights of all people regardless of creed, race, ancestry, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, age, record of offences, marital status, sexual orientation, economic status, family status, or disability.

Rationale

In preparing these recommendations, the council recognized that persons can experience exclusion for a variety of causes. Council also recognized that the church's welcoming function is primarily exercised through its most localized expressions.

The welcoming role of synods is limited to that of extending participatory privileges to clergy and congregations who seek to affiliate with this church. Hence, while it is appropriate for churchwide bodies to ask congregations and specialized ministries to affirm certain principles in their practices of welcome, we need to acknowledge that the primary responsibility for enactment continues to reside with those more localized expressions of the church.

As such, the Synod Council believes that the synod should affirm a broadly articulated principle of inclusion that also acknowledges the continued authority of this church's constitutions and enactments, and then, encourage congregations and specialized ministries to embody this principle in all aspects of their respective ministries.

Synod Council further believes that these discussions provide a welcome opportunity for us to encourage the application of these same principles of inclusion within the wider public sphere.

2. Regarding the Question of Same-Sex Blessings

In the past year, the question of same-sex blessings has received considerable attention within the ELCIC. The Eastern Synod Council believes that it is time for this matter to be formally addressed by the appropriate decision making bodies of our church. As such we are forwarding the following motion for consideration at Synod Assembly 2004. Synod Council's intention is not to pre-suppose a particular outcome, but to bring further clarity and focus to the conversations presently taking place across our church.

That the Eastern Synod petition the ELCIC National Church Council to initiate a study of the theological, ecclesiological, and pastoral implications of authorizing a parish based local option to perform same-sex blessings and bring appropriate recommendations to the 2005 ELCIC National Convention.

For purposes of this motion a local option is defined as:

- 1. Requiring the consent of the congregation or parish or employing agency.**
- 2. Requiring the consent of the regularly called pastor.**
- 3. Requiring the use of an ELCIC approved rite of blessing.**