

A letter from the Northwestern Ohio Synod Council to Congregations and Rostered Leaders

***As the elected leadership of this synod, the Northwestern Ohio Synod Council has penned the following letter in response to the Churchwide Assembly Actions which were taken in Minneapolis in August. This letter is intended to explain the breadth of the ministry taking place throughout this church we call the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and in the Northwestern Ohio Synod – and to explain that ministry is indeed happening beyond, and in spite of, the ongoing discussion regarding sexuality.***

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ of the Northwestern Ohio Synod:

If you can endure one more conversation about homosexuality and the church, please give us a moment.

We, the members of your NW Ohio Synod Council, are as deeply conflicted on this issue as the church itself. We are conservative, and offended; we are progressive, and relieved; we are weary, and anxious to get on with the work of the Gospel. It is for the work of the Gospel that we now write you.

What is it, after all, that we agree on? After all the sound and fury devoted to this issue (and it *is* an important issue, with the even more important issue of how to interpret Scripture and tradition looming in the background), still, are there not other vitally important points we affirm together?

- That “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst,” and if I am the worst, then surely I need to be cautious criticizing you!
- That our local congregations are places where we “live and move and have our being,” filled with people we have loved for years. If we react in anger against the ELCA, are not these people, our very neighbors, the ones we will hurt the most?
- That we are the Body of Christ, linked through our synod to others in northwest Ohio and around the world. The hungry in Africa, and on our city streets; those hearing the Good News, maybe for the first time, in fledgling congregations and campus ministries and companion synods; the most vulnerable among us, and those who serve them. Which of these should bear the burden of our differences?

We remind you of the time of the Reformation. Luther kick-started it in 1517; the Formula of Concord, signifying basic agreement among those who said they agreed with Luther, wasn't signed till 1580! In other words, we today may be at the beginning of a difficult conversation that most of us will not live to see concluded. Such are the crosses that come upon the church from time to time—but it doesn't mean we cease to be the Body of Christ together, for the world, and it doesn't mean we should allow our mission and ministry to be diminished.

On the contrary, strange as this may sound, we sense a revival coming. We choose to believe, like Joseph in Genesis, that God intends this moment not for evil, but for good—people reading Scripture, people examining their own hearts, people becoming acquainted with our many synodical ministries, people stepping forward in faith. We have frankly been a lukewarm church for too long a time. We acknowledge the passions this issue has raised on both sides, and pray only that you commend that fervor to God, that He might take it and use it to ends that only He can see.

We remain your servants in Christ,

The Northwestern Ohio Synod Council:

Bishop Marcus Lohrmann, President  
Craig Klopfleisch, Vice President (St. John, Celina)  
Luann Canham Kornowa, Secretary (Olivet, Sylvania)  
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Kevin McNeal – First, Galion  
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Marjorie Wagner – Trinity, Fremont  
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Tom Wiese – Zion, Lima