

Extending “On Leave from Call” Status for Rostered Leaders in Same Gendered Covenanted Relationships

1 **WHEREAS**, the church universal is responsible for the visible unity of the body of Christ, as
2 reflected in the life and teachings of Jesus and embodied in his death and resurrection; and
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4 **WHEREAS**, the church is in a period of discernment about the best means of “finding ways to live
5 together faithfully in the midst of disagreements” (Churchwide Assembly 2005 Statement on
6 Human Sexuality); and
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8 **WHEREAS**, there are congregations being served faithfully by ordained clergy who are in same
9 gendered covenanted relationships that are not in accordance with the Evangelical Lutheran Church
10 in America’s (ELCA) “Vision and Expectations” document on ordination; and
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12 **WHEREAS**, these clergy in same gendered covenanted relationships are still rostered but are
13 technically “on leave from call”, and the mission of these churches will suffer if the called and
14 ordained leaders are not allowed to remain on the clergy roster; and
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16 **WHEREAS**, the discernment process requires time and space for conversation and prayerful
17 engagement; therefore be it
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19 **RESOLVED**, that the Bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod (MAS) shall prayerfully consider the
20 well being of both the church universal and the individual congregations within the MAS served by
21 these rostered leaders when determining the future steps; and be it further
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23 **RESOLVED**, that the MAS in Assembly supports the Office of the Bishop in the exercise and
24 prayerful discernment and “disciplinary restraint” in working with congregations choosing leaders
25 whose roster status is in dispute solely as a result of the leader’s being in a same-gendered
26 covenanted relationship; and be it further
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28 **RESOLVED**, that the MAS Executive Committee of the Synod Council delay action to remove
29 rostered leaders solely because of same gendered covenanted relationships, thus maintaining the
30 status of “on leave from call” beyond the three-year limit if they have been called by a congregation
31 otherwise in good standing in the MAS; and be it further
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33 **RESOLVED**, that the MAS Council inform the ELCA’s Conference of Bishops about the position
34 of the MAS; and be it finally
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36 **RESOLVED**, that the MAS Synod Council initiate an opportunity for discussion about appropriate
37 status for these called and ordained clergy persons within the MAS for clergy and laity.

Author: Rev. Ronald Johnson, Holy Trinity Lutheran, 612-729-8358, office@htlcmpls.org

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Edina Community Lutheran Church Council

Lutheran Church of Christ the Redeemer Church Council

MAS Crosstown Conference, February 9, 2006

MAS Central Conference, February 19, 2006

MAS South Minneapolis Conference, February 23, 2006

The Reference and Counsel Committee (RCC) forwards this resolution to the MAS Assembly for consideration, without recommendation. RCC has refrained from making a recommendation in order that the Assembly may, in its deliberations, properly focus on the substance of this resolution rather than on the actions of the Committee.

Background

As Lutherans continue to discern together how to live in the tension of differing opinions on sexuality, practical realities require continued discussion. The ambiguities life presents for the faithful require further refinement of many aspects of the Church's mission.

Currently, with the decisions of the 2005 Churchwide Assembly in Orlando, the status of some rostered leaders requires another look. The "rostered leaders" of the ELCA include ordained clergy, and theologically trained lay professionals serving as commissioned Associates in Ministry, consecrated Diaconal Ministers, or Deaconesses. There are rostered leaders in this synod who were called while living in compliance with all the guidelines required for ordination. That is, individuals who were single and celibate, or who were married to someone of the other gender, were called and ordained (or commissioned or consecrated) as rostered leaders in the ELCA.

These leaders then found that the truest expression of themselves in relationship is with someone of the same gender. These relationships of fidelity are not recognized as legitimate partnerships for ordained clergy or lay rostered leaders in the ELCA. Thus, the roster status of these leaders is "on leave from call." A congregation that calls one of these leaders is technically still "in the call process." Yet, these congregations receive the ministry of Word and Sacrament through the ministry of these pastors.

In 2005, the ELCA in Churchwide Assembly discussed issues of ordination as it relates to people who are gay or lesbian and in same-gendered covenanted relationships. The ELCA in Assembly determined that it was not able fully to bless the concept of calling rostered leaders who acknowledge that they are lesbian or gay, and who are in covenanted relationships of fidelity.