

2019 Resolution-1

An “Affirmation of Welcome” was adopted by a majority (233 yes, 141 no) of the 1992 Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly. This resolution resolved that “gay and lesbian people share with all others the worth that comes from being unique individuals created by God; and gay and lesbian people are welcome within the membership of our congregations upon making the same affirmation of faith that all members make; and as members of our congregations, gay and lesbian people are expected and encouraged to share in the sacramental and general life of their congregations and of this synod; and that this Assembly of the Southeast Michigan Synod encourages all of our congregations and ministries to adopt a similar resolution . . .”

A second resolution was adopted in 1996 that reaffirmed the 1992 action of our synod adopting the “Affirmation of Welcome” as well as the 1991 action of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly that “gay and lesbian people as individuals created by God are welcome to participate fully in the life of congregations of the ELCA.” While the spirit of both resolutions is as valid as when first adopted, times have changed as well as language in the intervening years. For example, the 1992 resolution directed the Southeast Michigan Synod to “inform Lutherans Concerned of this action.” The Southeast Michigan Synod thus became a “Reconciled in Christ” (RIC) synod of Lutherans Concerned along with five other ELCA synods and over 75 Lutheran organizations and congregations.

Lutherans Concerned/North America is now ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation. And, the program formerly known as “Reconciled in Christ” is now called “Reconciling in Christ” denoting that an “Affirmation of Welcome” is an ongoing and continuing process as opposed to one that is completed or finished by a vote. The RIC roster now exceeds 900 settings, including the Southeast Michigan Synod and 15 of our congregations/campus ministries, and the Lutheran seminary for our ELCA region in Columbus, Ohio. In order for the Southeast Michigan Synod “Affirmation of Welcome” to remain consistent and compliant with the more inclusive and expansive current RIC terminology of ReconcilingWorks, we must update our resolution language.

Language changes as God’s creation and our understanding of God’s creation continues to grow and expand in this world. Just as we are being made new, it is important we ask ourselves, “How are we walking with God through this changing world?” While the phrase “gay and lesbian people” was once thought to be all-encompassing, such words alone now fall short of conveying

full diversity and inclusion for many. We are seeking to update our Synod's welcome statement in order to employ the most helpful and inclusive language. This will ensure our siblings in Christ of all sexual orientations, gender identities, or gender expressions are invited and welcomed into the full life of the church. We are then free to share the love of Christ to ALL!

Resolved, that the Southeast Michigan Synod substitutes the phrase "Christians of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions" for the phrase "gay and lesbian people" wherever it appears in the 1992 adopted "Affirmation of Welcome."

Resolved, that the Southeast Michigan Synod inform ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation of this action.

Submitted by

Pr. Matthew Bode, Zion Ferndale

Pr. Lori Carey, Trinity Ann Arbor

Pr. Jack Eggleston, Unity Southgate

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Pr. Elizabeth Friedman, Lord of Light Lutheran Campus Ministry

Pr. Paul Gateman, Zion Ferndale

Pr. Branden Hunt, St. Philip Trenton

Pr. Sharon Janot, Abiding Presence Rochester Hills

Pr. Jen Kiefer, St. John Dundee

Pr. Susan Lidums, Our Risen Lord Burton

Pr. John Meulendyk, Retired

Pr. Bart Muller, Retired

Pr. Monica Villarreal, Salem Flint

Pr. Rob Zahn, Hope Farmington Hills

The committee recommends this resolution.