



EASTERN SYNOD
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
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April 30, 2008.

Holy Cross Lutheran Church
1035 Wayne Dr.
Newmarket, ON
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Dear friends,

I write to you this day with a heavy heart. On April 20, 2008, your congregation voted to issue a call to a candidate who has not been for approved for ordination through the candidacy processes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. This action marks a serious breach of the constitutional obligation of all congregations and rostered persons to “abide loyally by the constitution, administrative bylaws and enactments of this church and those of the synod of which it becomes a part.” *ELCIC Constitution Article VI, Section 3.*

Simply stated, this provision articulates our understanding that the various individual expressions of the church are intrinsically linked to one another. As partners, one with another, we are duty-bound to honour and abide by the decisions which we have prayerful and carefully made together. Although such obligations can sometimes frustrate, and in the short-term, may seem to impede the advancement of new understandings and practices, for the most part they serve us well. Indeed, it is only through our commitment to maintaining a reasonable level of mutual accountability and internal discipline that we are able to claim the measure of denominational integrity which is foundational to our shared public witness.

On January 21, 2008 I met with your Congregational Council in an attempt to dissuade you from taking this step. On March 27, 2008 I subsequently met with your congregation’s general membership to this same end. I will not repeat the several, and I believe cogent, arguments that I presented to you on those occasions, but must again tell you that I cannot support the course of action you have chosen.

With you, I am committed to work toward ending practices that preclude the full participation of all God’s people in the life of the church, regardless of sexual orientation. However, given our present context and recent decisions that have been made by the ELCIC, I do not believe that your proposed action will advance this cause. Instead, I believe that it may well undermine the considerable, though slow, progress that has been made toward this end in recent years.

Furthermore, I am fearful that your actions have the potential to do irreparable damage to the already fragile connecting fabric of our church.

When I met with you earlier this year, I clearly detailed the processes I would be obliged to administer in response to this proposed action. Should the service on May 16, 2008 proceed as planned, I will have no choice but to initiate those processes, albeit with a deep and profound sadness.

I hope and pray that you can receive this counsel from your bishop as also coming from a friend who has had a high and significant regard for your congregation and its ministry. I believe that you have made a decision whose consequences could, in a variety of ways, serve to undermine the end which many of us seek. As such, I respectfully but fervently urge and admonish you to refrain from continuing on this proposed course of action.

With all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Michael". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rev. Michael J. Pryse, Bishop
MJP:cd

cc. Eastern Synod Pastors and Diaconal Ministers
Eastern Synod Council
Eastern Synod Ministry Directors
ELCIC Bishops
ELCIC National Church Council