

ST. TIMOTHY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Goose Creek, SC

Questions Submitted regarding ELCA/NALC

The first question is leftover from 8/21



Last Sunday you said the ELCA has decided not to have any more missionary evangelists. How can they make that decision when Jesus gave us the Great Commission???

8/21 Response: My question exactly! Because the people responsible for this area of ministry have been at National Assembly this week, I have been unsuccessful in reaching anyone who is able to answer this question for me. I have left messages and will follow up on those calls now that the Assembly has adjourned.

8/28 Response: According to the Rev. Rafael Padilla, Executive Director of Global Mission for the ELCA, the ELCA practices global mission through a concept known as “accompaniment.” This means that the ELCA walks with, or accompanies, indigenous churches around the world. The ELCA sees this accompaniment role as supporting local churches, rather than taking a lead in evangelism. Thus, current ELCA missionaries are primarily in teaching and service roles.



What concrete plans are made to have the congregation meet with a Bishop from the SC Synod, the ELCA, or the NALC?

- The vote for this congregation to enter into a period of discernment regarding the ELCA was defeated in March. Had the vote passed, formal meetings with Bishop Yoos (SC Synod, ELCA) would have been required. Additionally, meetings with NALC representatives would have been held. Until we as a congregation decide to enter a discernment process, plans for such meetings would be inappropriate, and have therefore not been made.
- In my conversations with Bishop Yoos this week, we agreed that if (after all submitted questions have been addressed in these Information Sessions) the congregation decides to enter into a formal period of discernment regarding its future with the ELCA, such meetings will be scheduled.



Is it possible to have open meetings for discussion – not one-way information?

- Because the only topic and purpose of these Informational Sessions involve theological issues, the format needs to be didactic (teaching), and it is important that such teaching comes from someone with theological training.
- In this congregation, it is my responsibility to offer that teaching – and so the format of the Information Sessions will remain didactic in nature.
- I am open to, and welcome, individual conversations/discussions on any of the topics presented. Please call the church office if you wish to schedule an appointment for such a discussion.



It is held by some that the church should not change as community values and morays evolve and change. With that in mind, please explain why interracial marriage, children born out of wedlock, and people of all races are accepted in our church, yet others would be excluded from some positions by an NALC congregation.

- Community values and mores that do not contradict Scripture are quite different from those that do.
- Nothing in Scripture condemns interracial marriage, children born out of wedlock, or inclusion of all races. Quite the contrary – Scripture clearly states that all are a part of the Body of Christ.
- The exclusion to which I believe you are referring is the ordination of non-celibate gay and lesbian clergy.
- Denominations have standards for ordination. Among those standards are theological training, profession of faith, a lifestyle consistent with the teachings of the denomination, and evidence of a call.
- Lifestyle is the issue raised in this question. In all Lutheran churches, when a candidate for ordination consistently and blatantly lives outside of God's plan and design for humanity, that person is disqualified from ordination. This does not mean that clergy are expected to be perfect in following God's plan. It does mean that when (not if) they fall short, they are to seek renewal of their relationship with God through repentance (literally turning and going in a new direction) and God's forgiveness.

Please read again page 2 of the August 14th handout on "Bound Conscience." Copies are available for you this morning. Also, all Information Session handouts are posted on our website (www.sainttimothy.lutheran.org).



It seems like the NALC was formed after the decision of the Assembly in 2009, to support gay marriages and pastors that are gay. I thought that we believed that Jesus brought about changes in the law. What about the woman at the well?

Did Jesus not come to change the law? There are many instances of this. Are you saying that this is not taken in good faith?

These two questions are related, and my response has 2 parts:

Part 1 – Clarification regarding the 2009 vote:

- The 2009 Assembly vote to accept the social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, led to the ELCA's decision to allow for the ordination of homosexual candidates who are in committed, long-term, monogamous, same-gender relationships.
- The ELCA has not endorsed gay marriage, nor made provisions for it.
- The ELCA has always had gay and lesbian clergy, as did the predecessor denominations (LCA, ALC and AELC) which merged in 1988 to form the ELCA. Sexual orientation has never been an ordination question.
- The church's expectation of its clergy has been that marriage between one man and one woman is the exclusively appropriate place for sexual intimacy. Prior to the 2009 vote, those outside of such a marriage covenant were expected to remain celibate. In 2009, the ELCA made an exception to that standard for gay and lesbian clergy, though heterosexual singles remain bound to this standard.

Part 2 – Regarding Jesus and the Law:

- Through His death and resurrection, Jesus defeated the power of sin and death – making possible for us the relationship God intended from the beginning of creation.
- God's rules to live by are still God's rules to live by. They are not the means by which we are acceptable to God, but rather, they define how we are to live in relationship with God and with one another.
- Referring to the law's function of guiding us to a right relationship with God, Jesus is clear that his purpose was neither to abolish nor to change the law, but to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17-18).
- Jesus called and continues to call people to a refreshed understanding, not a change, of God's law.



Why did those that support the NALC not join the Missouri Synod?

- Some congregations that left the ELCA have, in fact, joined the Missouri Synod (LCMS); however, the majority of former ELCA congregations are uncomfortable with the restrictive and exclusive theology of LCMS.
- The NALC presents itself as a theologically centrist denomination under the authority of a bishop, thus offering an appealing alternative to many who have decided to leave the ELCA.



I have heard that the NALC supports those that are gay except in marriage. How can we support them when we do not “allow” them to be in a union with each other? When was it our right to judge?

- Gay unions are legal in only a few states. Both the ELCA and the NALC never support activities that are contrary to civil law.
- In addition, both the ELCA and the NALC, while recognizing that people choose a variety of living arrangements, teach that marriage – the relationship God instituted and blessed, is exclusively between one man and one woman.
- Both the ELCA and the NALC teach that it is our responsibility, as Christians in relationship with one another, to hold each other accountable in living Godly lives. Thus, it is imperative that we judge behavior as being either aligned with God’s will or not.



If we believe in the law then where does it leave those of us that are divorcees? It seems like things are picked out that is the present discussion that is not popular!

Jesus teaches that, when Moses was given a rule permitting divorce, it was given because of people’s hardness of hearts. Jesus reminds us that divorce is outside of God’s preferred plan for us – that marriage is a life-long covenant (Matthew 19:1-12). A reality of life, however, is that marriages die – and people divorce for many reasons. This is a sign and a consequence of the broken imperfect lives we live. God loves us broken and imperfect people, divorced or not, and calls us to repentance and a renewed relationship with Him through Jesus.