

## Frequently Asked Questions about changes in the ELCA

**Q:** What is the ELCA?

**A:** ELCA stands for "Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." It consists of approximately 4.6 million members and 10,000 congregations. It is the largest of several organizations of Lutheran congregations. It was created effective January 1, 1988, by a merger of the Lutheran Church in America (LCA); The American Lutheran Church (ALC); and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC.) Those who were at Grace Church at the time of the merger may remember that there was sufficient concern about the direction that the ELCA might take that several families/individuals left Grace.

**Q:** What did the 2009 ELCA churchwide assembly vote to change regarding sexual boundaries?

**A:** They voted to provide an option for congregations who choose to do so to bless same gender relationships, and to call and ordain pastors who are in a same gender, lifelong, monogamous relationship.

**Q:** Is the current ELCA crisis one of sexuality or theology?

**A:** The current crisis is a result of opposing theologies, i.e., the "Theology of Redemption" versus the "Theology of Acceptance." The divide between these opposing theologies is growing.

*The following two questions are related and are answered as one:*

**Q:** Why would ELCA adopt this policy (blessing same-sex unions and allowing said persons to be ordained pastors) when it goes against what the Bible teaches?

**Q:** I have no opposition to a person choosing a same-sex lifestyle that suits them. I have a problem when said lifestyle is pushed down others' throats, especially when the Bible doesn't support it. The Bible is unchanging like God. What gives man the right to change it?

**A:** In reviewing the document "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (available at [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)), which is the Social Statement that was adopted along with the changes to the pastoral offices, we are led back to "Roots of the Current Crisis in the ELCA" document. The ELCA does not try to justify the changing policies based on scripture, although there are many Biblical references cited. The ELCA seems to base their rationale on an interpretation that seems to be contextual instead of timeless.

**Q:** Why are we still with the ELCA if their theology is opposing ours?

**A:** We have held a meeting to determine whether to go through the process of considering the direction of our congregation. Although a vote was made not to enter the process of consideration, we still have members of this congregation with different views towards the recent changes made in the ELCA. We are offering as much information as possible to the congregation. Another vote to consider the direction of the congregation may be held in the future if the congregation so desires.

**Q:** How do I designate my offering so it does not go to ELCA in Chicago?

**A:** You may designate your offerings to go where you wish. Please see the pastors for further information.

**Q:** If we leave the ELCA what will happen to the following:

Our church property?

**A:** As long as we join another Lutheran church body, we would retain all property rights. If we would choose to become independent or some other denomination, the Synod

Bishop/council would decide what would happen to "our" property.

Pastor's pension/insurance?

**A:** The ELCA pension/insurance is operated by a separate subsidiary and is fully transferable/portable. The Pension plan has for some time operated retirement plans for pastors outside the ELCA.

Our Youth Programs?

**A:** At the local congregational level, nothing needs to change unless we want it to change. At a regional/national level, many other youth programs exist (including national youth gatherings) that are operated either independently or by other faithful Lutheran groups, such as Youth Encounters @ [www.youthencounter.org](http://www.youthencounter.org)

Our Mission/Benevolence giving?

**A:** In part that will depend on which other Lutheran body we join. But, generally speaking, we will still be able to designate specific mission giving as we have been doing.

**Q:** How would our involvement with Lutheran organizations like Lutheran Social Services, Lutheran World Relief, and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans change if we severed corporate relationship with the ELCA?

**A:** Our relationship with these organizations would not need to change because they already have relationships with many different Lutheran Church bodies.

**Q:** If we severed corporate relationship with the ELCA, how would our participation in Women of the ELCA (WELCA) change?

**A:** Participation may continue as is at all levels, including the Muskingum Conference, but women from our congregation would not be able to hold Synodical or National WELCA offices.

**Q:** What about our tax-exempt status?

**A:** We could receive tax-exempt status from the NALC.

**Q:** What are the financial obligations of belonging to the NALC?

**A:** None.

**Q:** What about our liturgies and worship materials?

**A:** We would be able to continue to use the materials we presently use.