

**HISTORY OF ACTIONS BY THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE
SIERRA PACIFIC SYNOD, ELCA
Pertaining to ELCA Rules Affecting Gay & Lesbian Clergy
and Related Disciplinary Issues
1988 -2000**

- **Res. 88-10** Called for continued open-minded study and dialogue on the issue of homosexuality and encouraged "open minded and informed listening;" requested inclusion of the issue of homosexuality in the ELCA study on human sexuality, and directed the Synod Council to make a study and present it to the 1989 Assembly; and in the interim, "to operate in a clearly pastoral manner consistent with our previous church bodies' positions regarding sexuality and the ministry."
- **Res. 89-10** Called on all in the synod to: recognize homophobia as a sin; recognize the God-given giftedness within the gay and lesbian community; and, study and consider issues of homosexuality and expanding ministry with gays and lesbians.

Note: *The 1989 Assembly defeated two resolutions that would have: affirmed policy statements of predecessor bodies (LCA and ALC) that categorized homosexuality or homosexual erotic behavior as contrary to God's intent; affirmed more recent statements of ELCA groups that deemed that clergy who were "self-proclaimed and unrepentant homosexuals" were living lives not consistent with the Gospel; and asking that the ELCA not change its policy about excluding homosexuals from the ordained ministry until each congregation had an opportunity to discuss and express by vote its position on the subject.*

- **Res. 90.1** Affirmed that gay and lesbian people share with all others the worth that comes from being unique individuals created by God, are welcome within our congregations, and are expected and encouraged to share in the sacramental and general life of their congregations and of this synod. The Assembly also memorialized the ELCA Churchwide Assembly to make the same affirmation.
- **Res. 90-2** Asked the Church Council, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, to authorize a study of the ordination of homosexual persons using the process developed for social statements.
- **Res. 90-6** Authorized an intensive effort to encourage education, prayer, and charitable dialogue on issues regarding sexuality and the ministry in congregations and throughout the Sierra Pacific Synod; and affirmed that the position of the Sierra Pacific Synod in matters of sexuality and ministry is that of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- **Res. 91-3** Memorialized the Churchwide Assembly to call on the Division for Ministry and the ELCA Church Council to study the acceptance of gay and lesbian persons who are in "covenantal relationships" as pastors, and report back to the 1993 Churchwide Assembly.

Note: *1991 Assembly defeated a resolution that would have asked the Churchwide Assembly to eliminate the conditional expulsion of the St. Frances and First United Congregations and restore them to full membership 1/1/96. A resolution requiring the distribution of the full decision of the disciplinary panel in that case was also defeated.*

- **SA93.5.21** Encouraged the entire synod to maintain a strong bond of fellowship with St. Frances and First United Lutheran Churches of San Francisco and encouraged those congregations to apply to the Sierra Pacific Synod for recognition as congregations if expulsion occurred on 12/31/95 (as a result of disciplinary action based on their calls of non-ELCA rostered gay and lesbian pastors) .
- **SA93.5.24** Commended Synod Council for encouraging pastors to deliberate prayerfully and to use wise pastoral discretion in decisions regarding the blessing of monogamous, covenantal, same-sex relationships; encouraged on-going Scripturally-based discussion; and, in acknowledging differing views, encouraged respect for serious conscience-directed deliberation so that "our unity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and not in mandated conformity in all matters of pastoral practice."

Note: *A resolution proposed at the 1994 Assembly was defeated that sought to rescind the Synod Council action referred to by SA93.5.24.*

- **SA94.5.10** Stated that the Assembly lamented the loss of Pastor Ross Merkel from the ELCA clergy roster (because he is a gay man in a committed relationship), and pledged "continuing partnership in ministry with St. Paul Lutheran Church, Oakland, California, and its pastor, the Rev. Ross D. Merkel, for in our understanding and experiences of God's love and grace in our lives we can do no other."
- **SA94.4.31** Urged 1995 Churchwide Assembly Voting Members to seek to amend ELCA Bylaw 20.21.02.c to avoid removal of clergy from the ELCA roster solely for disregarding provisions of the church's constitutions and bylaws.
- **SA94.4.36** Questioned whether members of suspended congregations should be prevented from serving as members of work groups of the church, and urged 1995 Churchwide Assembly Voting Members to propose an amendment to ELCA Bylaw 20.31.02.b to strike "loss of the right to petition" (as a consequence of suspension).
- **SA95.5.18** The Assembly again resolved to encourage a strong bond of fellowship with the St. Frances and First United congregations.
- **SA97.5.16** Memorialized the 1997 Churchwide Assembly to remove from *Vision and Expectations* the expectation of abstinence from homosexual sexual relationships by those who are "homosexual in their self-understanding" and directed the Council to transmit the same proposal to the ELCA Church Council.
- **SA98.5.18** Called upon the 1999 Churchwide Assembly, ELCA Church Council, Conference of Bishops, and Division for Ministry to rescind the rules in *Vision and Expectations* and the *Guidelines for Discipline* against "practicing homosexuals" being precluded from ordained ministry, and asked all synods to join in the call for rescission of these rules.
- **SA00.5.**** Encouraged the Synod's Bishop and Council to do everything possible within church guidelines to avoid the expulsion of University Lutheran Chapel in Berkeley (following its call of the Rev. Jeff Johnson, a non-ELCA rostered pastor who is gay and has refused to accept the *Vision and Expectations* policy pertaining to gay and lesbian clergy).

Note: Action Numbers identify the year and month of the Assembly, and the numerical order of the action during the year's assembly. For example: Action SA93.5.21 was adopted at the May 1993 Assembly.

Sec. Note: Prepared as Reference for SC00.6.** Resolution to ELCA Church Council