

Lent 2023

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We preach Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:23) for the salvation of all who hear.

Most people in our churches and schools treasure and adore, by God's grace, the preaching of Christ and the truths of holy Scripture. Unfortunately, society has increasingly walked away from the clear biblical teaching of human sexuality and an individual's God-given sex. Many have been deceived and confused by this false humanistic teaching. For that reason, it is important that our schools consciously address God-given sex and sexual identity in our schools. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and its schools must be clear in our communication with faculty, staff, students and parents concerning what the Scriptures teach and that we continue to teach the biblical truths of God as creator and we as His beloved creatures. This is also our First Amendment right.

As these issues press upon us, God's promise to His people rings out: "But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine'" (Isaiah 43:1). God often links His love and promises to His role as Creator. As our society denies God as creator and the one who lovingly gives people their sex, either male or female, the Gospel itself is at stake.

I encourage each of you to stand strong on the God's Word as you interact with faculty, staff, students and parents. The Scriptures are our only source of teaching and life. And we do not shrink away from teaching God's truth even when the world opposes us or questions what we believe. That's often easier said than done. I understand the challenges you face, since I face them daily in different ways, and I pray for you. The following guide will aid your school as you seek to remain faithful to God's Word and serve those in your community. I encourage you to read this and to use it well.

Above all, we preach Christ crucified because it is Good News. Even in these issues, we desire that all would be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

In Christ,

Pastor Matthew C. Harrison

President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

P.S. I encourage you to read these reports from the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR): *Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective* and *A Chaste and Decent Life: An Update to Human Sexuality 1981*.

I also highly recommend *Disordered: Lies about Human Nature and the Truth That Sets Us Free* | by Rev. Christopher Esget (CPH 2023).

Pastor Esget's book is a very readable explanation of what is happening in our society today on these issues, and offers a strong advocacy for our parochial schools.



Sample Statement of Belief on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality¹

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (GEN. 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term marriage has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (GEN. 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 COR. 6:18; 7:2-5; HEB. 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (MATT. 15:18-20; 1 COR. 6:9-10).

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of [the organization] as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to [the organization] members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by [the organization] in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (MATT. 5:16; PHIL. 2:14-16; 1 THESS. 5:22).

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (ACTS 3:19-21; ROM. 10:9-10; 1 COR. 6:9-11). We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (MARK 12:28-31; LUKE 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of [the organization].

Ministry to Homosexuals and Their Families

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod believes the Bible teaches that homosexual behavior is contrary to God's Word and will, and the LCMS seeks to minister to those who are struggling with homosexual inclinations.

In 1992, the LCMS adopted Res. 3-12A, "To Develop a Plan for Ministry to Homosexuals and Their Families." This resolution reads as follows:

Whereas, Many voices in our society as well as in various church bodies are expressing the view today that homophile behavior is acceptable alternative lifestyle; and

Whereas, The Word of God clearly condemns homophile behavior in Lev. 18:22, Rom. 1:26-27, and 1 Cor. 6:9; and

Whereas, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention in 1973 stated: "That the Synod recognizes homophile behavior as intrinsically sinful"; and

Whereas, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations document on *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective*, states, "Whatever the causes of such a condition may be ... homosexual orientation is profoundly 'unnatural' without implying that such a person's sexual orientation is a matter of conscious, deliberate choice. However, this fact cannot be used by the homosexual as an excuse to justify homosexual behavior. As a sinful human being, the homosexual is accountable to God for homosexual thoughts, words and deeds." (*Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective*, p. 35); and

Whereas, The redeeming love of Christ, which rescues humanity from sin, death, and the power of Satan, is offered to all through repentance and faith in Christ, regardless of the natures of their sinfulness; and

Whereas, The need exists to make available a carefully developed Law/Gospel ministry plan to congregations and other institutions in order to minister to those who are troubled by their homosexuality; and

¹ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, "Protecting Your Ministry," 11-12. files.lcms.org/f/protecting-your-ministry-legal-guide.

Whereas, It is necessary for the church to expose and resist the sexual idolatry of our society; therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in convention, reaffirms the position it stated in 1973, “That the Synod recognizes homophile behavior as intrinsically sinful”; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod direct the appropriate boards and commissions to develop a plan for ministry usable by congregations, campus ministries, institutions, and agencies in the Synod, for the purpose of providing biblical and Gospel-oriented ministry to persons troubled by being homophile in their sexual orientations and to their families; and be it finally

Resolved, That the goals to be pursued by such a plan for ministry be to offer to our world biblically alternative models of sexual celibacy outside of a committed, permanent heterosexual marriage and same-gender social, but not genitally sexual, deep friendships; to confront the individual with his/her sinfulness, and call him/her to repentance; to help the individual recognize that God can rescue individuals from homosexual orientation and practice; to assure him/her of forgiveness in Christ, contingent upon sincere repentance and faith in Christ, and to assure him/her of the love and acceptance of the church; to assist the individual to rely on Christ's love and strength to abstain from homophile behavior; to help the individual to bear his/her burden without fear of recrimination and rejections by his/her sisters and brothers in Christ; to find ways of ministering to families which include persons of homophile orientation; to do all this patiently, persistently, and compassionately in the love and Spirit of Christ, who says, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

Gender Identity/Sexual Orientation

1973—“To Declare Homophile Behavior Sinful” (Res. 2-04)

Whereas, God's Word clearly identifies homophile behavior as immoral, and condemns it (LEV. 18:22; 20:13 and ROM. 1:24-27) and

Whereas, The Law and the Gospel of Jesus Christ are to be proclaimed and applied to all conditions of mankind; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod recognize homophile behavior as intrinsically sinful; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod urge that the Law and Gospel of the Scriptures be applied to homophiles as appropriate with view toward ministering the forgiveness of our Lord Jesus Christ to any and all sinners who are penitent; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod decline Overtures 2-106A and 2-106B.

2019—“To Encourage Synod to Develop Resources to Aid Congregations and Schools regarding Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Issues” (Res. 11-03A)

Whereas, In the beginning God created man in his own image, “male and female, he created them” (GEN. 1:27); and

Whereas, As the Small Catechism (SC) teaches, “I believe that God has made me and all creatures. He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members ...” (SC II, First Article); and

Whereas, After humanity's fall into sin, Jesus again affirmed God's continuing work: that from the beginning he created them “male and female” (MATT. 19:4); and

Whereas, All sexual corruption and confusion result from humanity's fall into sin and often lead to rebellious and sinful acts against God's will (JAMES 1:14-15); and

Whereas, All sexual acts outside of faithful, biblical marriage, which is between one man and one woman, are sinful and contrary to God's will (ROM. 13:13, 1 COR. 6:9-11); and

Whereas, Gender is now considered by many in our culture as a social construct rather than a physical reality created by God; and

Whereas, The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that marriages may be contracted between two persons of the same sex; and

Whereas, Our society includes persons who are uncertain whether they are “truly” male or female (this does not include intersex individuals, see excursus in Commission on Theology and Church Relations [CTCR], *Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective*), others who present themselves as a member of the opposite sex in dress and physical appearance, and others who participate in hormonal and/or surgical procedures in an attempt to modify their anatomy from male to female or from female to male; and

Whereas, The Christian church is not without fault and has too often failed to minister compassionately to those who experience sexual orientation and gender identity issues, and has too often failed to address the sins of heterosexual members; and

Whereas, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1); and

Whereas, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) parochial schools, congregations, seminaries, the Concordia University System, and individuals in our Synod are experiencing mounting pressure as a result of cultural and legal changes; and

Whereas, LCMS church workers and laity have asked for guidance in pastoral care for individuals and families struggling with matters of same-sex attraction and gender identity issues; and

Whereas, Many faithful Christian individuals who experience sexual orientation or gender identity confusion have not accepted the common assumptions that same-sex acts and sex change therapies are moral, or even God pleasing; and

Whereas, The LCMS has produced resources such as the following CTCR reports: *Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective* (Sept. 2014); *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective* (Sept. 1981); *Response to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (April 2012); and *The Creator’s Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church* (Dec.2009); as well as the treatment of these matters in *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (Concordia Publishing House, 2017); therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention affirm and faithfully confess the biblical truth that God created humanity as male and female; and be it further

Resolved, That we regard all those who experience sexual orientation and gender identity issues as our neighbors, beloved of God, and therefore condemn acts of abuse committed against them; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention gives thanks for those individuals who, despite same-sex attraction or gender identity confusion, continue to live chaste and decent lives in repentant faith, and that LCMS congregations, districts, and Synod entities seek the counsel and leadership of such individuals in developing faithful approaches to minister to those who experience same-sex attraction and gender identity confusion; and be it further

Resolved, That pastors and congregations of the Synod be encouraged to minister compassionately to those who experience sexual orientation and gender identity issues through prayer, the proclamation of Law and Gospel, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, corporate and individual confession and absolution, the proper administration of the Lord’s Supper, the mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers and sisters, and pastoral care; and be it further

Resolved, That pastors and congregations of the Synod be encouraged to minister compassionately to the families, friends, and all others impacted by those who experience same-sex attraction, those who are involved in same-sex relationships, and those whose sexual self-understanding is shaped by a distressing conflict between their biological sex and their perceived gender identity through prayer, the proclamation of Law and Gospel, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, corporate and individual confession and absolution, the proper administration of the Lord’s Supper, the mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers and sisters, and pastoral care; and be it further

Resolved, That church workers and congregations in the Synod be encouraged to utilize the following CTCR reports: *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective*; *Response to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*; *The Creator’s Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church*; and *Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective*; as well as the treatment of these matters in *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (Concordia Publishing House, 2017); and be it further

Resolved, That the CTCR be directed to prioritize the updating of the 1981 study, *Human Sexuality*; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the Office of National Mission, Concordia Publishing House, the seminaries, and the Concordia University System to continue to provide resources that enable the church to confess the truth boldly and minister compassionately both to those who experience sexual orientation and gender identity issues and those who care for them.

Same-Sex Marriage

God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church (EPH. 5:32). Homosexual behavior is prohibited in the Old and New Testaments (LEV. 18:22, 24; 20:13; 1 COR. 6:9-20; 1 TIM. 1:10) as contrary to the Creator's design (ROM. 1:26-27).

The LCMS affirms that such behavior is "intrinsically sinful" and that, "on the basis of Scripture, marriage [is] the lifelong union of one man and one woman (GEN. 2:2-24; MATT. 19:5-6)" (2004 RES. 3-05A).

It has also urged its members "to give a public witness from Scripture against the social acceptance and legal recognition of homosexual 'marriage'" (2004 Res. 3-05A).

At the same time, the Synod firmly believes "the redeeming love of Christ, which rescues humanity from sin, death, and the power of Satan, is offered to all through repentance and faith in Christ, regardless of the nature of their sinfulness" (1992 Res. 3-12A).

Additional Information

Protecting Your Ministry: A Legal Guide for LCMS Congregations, Schools, and Ministries
files.lcms.org/f/protecting-your-ministry-legal-guide

The Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations has prepared reports titled:
Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective (see the discussion on the issue of homosexuality on pp. 32-36)
files.lcms.org/f/512D50BE-E3C6-4F78-869C-D095AA9A46C9

Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective
files.lcms.org/f/53E2B773-CD82-4B0D-96F4-D3FB56B17952

The Creator's Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church
files.lcms.org/f/5E4302F9-322E-4924-BA3D-5BC2AEB94476

Response to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust
files.lcms.org/f/097FB019-A398-4AA5-A6DE-FC611BFA06C6

Statements and Resources:

Theological Implications of the 2009 ELCA Decisions
files.lcms.org/f/F6FE70D3-81E8-4E56-BCB5-7841BF1A918E

A Plan for Ministry to Homosexuals and Their Families
files.lcms.org/f/6EA6ECFB-E04E-4B69-ADC3-5AE9CE1BCCCC

