

July 1, 2015



As the nation celebrates the recent Supreme Court ruling granting the freedom to marry in all fifty states, ReconcilingWorks yearns for a time when the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) will find a way to speak clearly, without reservation or caveat, about the dignity and value of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) lives as they are lived out in relationship and in family. We covet the day when the Church embraces in holiness and into wholeness people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions by boldly naming them as Beloved. We look forward to a world without outcasts, when all are strengthened for authentic, visible, faithful lives.

Sadly, we are not there yet. We are still only partial; the complete has not yet come. (1 Cor. 13)

In her pastoral letter to the church following the U.S. Supreme Court decision, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton covered some of the basic facts of our situation in the ELCA: that some will celebrate the decision while others will not; that the 2009 social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* neither endorses nor forbids same-gender marriage; that we continue to journey in discernment together even though we are not of one mind.

True enough.

But missing from the letter is a recognition of how the federal decision affects some in our communities far more profoundly than others. Missing is any word about how Friday's decision represents a concrete, positive good for the neighbor—as attested by that very neighbor. Missing is any appreciation for how the court has moved our nation closer to what *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* itself calls for: “equal protection, equal opportunities, and equal responsibilities under the law” for LGBTQ people. (p. 33)

And missing from the letter is any acknowledgement of how society, often with the church in tow, has shut out LGBTQ people and their families, giving rise to the need for the court to provide a civil remedy. Surely, the differences between how the church has treated LGBTQ people and their families and how it has treated straight folks cannot possibly be seen as “a gift to be celebrated,” as the letter purports. In saying so, the letter seems to not *see* LGBTQ people as full participants in the life of the church.

For now, we all see—and are seen—in a mirror, dimly. ReconcilingWorks will continue to build community for worship, education, and support. We will foster welcome and acceptance in all Lutheran settings. We will advocate for the ecclesial changes necessary to ensure full participation in all rites, sacraments, and ministries of the Church. And we will invite all people into Gospel lives of authenticity, integrity, and wholeness, so they will never have to question if their presence is truly welcome.

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ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation