

Presentation #3 November 1, 2009
Sunday Symposiums, Bethany Lutheran Church, Spencer, IA 51301
Pastor Scott A. Meier

Scripture and Prayer:

2 Timothy 1: 7–9

⁷For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

⁸So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, ⁹who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.

Prayer:

Responding to Churchwide Decisions:

I will attempt to summarize the first two presentations at the Sunday Symposiums. In these first two sessions – we have been working very hard to answer the question, “Is homosexual behavior contrary to the will of God?”

Pastor Dan Taylor and myself have worked hard to carefully understand the Role of Biblical Authority and different ways that people understand the concept of Biblical Authority and how that influences how they read and interpret the relevant Biblical passages.

Even though Seminary Professors and College Professors start with the same Bible – there has been a distinctively different concept of Biblical Authority. I have described this using the analogy of the Continental Divide. Why use such a dramatic image? Because I believe that the two different view points are not just a little different - the difference is vast. I believe these two different concepts of Biblical Authority have been used in academic settings for at least 50 years. But like melting snow on the continental divide, there has been a trickle down effect through students at seminaries, colleges and universities. Some of these students have become faculty, some have become pastors, some have become college professors and others are like some of you – spread throughout a variety of professions. The two different concepts of Biblical Authority can be understood in this way.

One side of the divide says that their essential understanding of Scripture is that they were written by humans using their own experiences to try to understand God’s ways. On this side of the divide, authority essentially flows to the experience of people. For this side of the divide, Human reason and experience are the ultimate authority in the interpretation of Biblical texts. In this view – human interpretation has the final say, the final authority. In addition, when the Scriptures are used this way they become relativistic. People are saying, “But really its fine to have a diversity of interpretations,

its ok even if they contradict each other. We can just live in the tension. We can find unity in diversity.” For this side of the divide, truth and authority are relative. That means – each individual sets their own truth and there is absolutely no authority. For them its about diversity and their code phrase is: “Let’s all just get along.”

The other side of the divide is that the Scriptures are essentially the effort of God to communicate God’s will to us – so that we can understand our experiences. In this view, the Authority of Scripture comes from God’s initiative. Scripture is understood as God’s revelation to us humans. This understanding sees the Bible as God’s Word to us and for us.

Jesus is the messenger who speaks the Bible’s message – in fact, Jesus himself is the message of the Bible. Jesus makes the Words of the Bible authentic. Jesus is the authority – that authorizes the Authority of the Scriptures.

For me or you to have eternal life and to live the new life that Jesus offers to us, we must believe both the Words of the Bible and Jesus who graciously offers them to us.

There has been careful examination of the wide range of Bible passages and interpretations. Pastor Dan helped us to understand there are at least 4 categories of Biblical interpretation with his helpful matrix from last week. Radically Supporting, Moderately Supporting, Moderately Opposed and Radically Opposed. It is also helpful to understand that the moderate and radical labels define the degree of Radical-ness – that is, the moderates are either supporting or opposed – but not as radical as some.

Pastor Dan and myself, along with those who have attended this Symposium have been forced by these circumstances to consider the merit of these points of view and especially in light of the Authority of God’s Word.

The prayed and over and well thought out conclusions that I have arrived at identify that the Moderately Supporting Group – although well meaning and compassionate have a Biblical interpretation that remains as unacceptable as the Radically Supporting Group. Why is this unacceptable?

Because there is the attempt to frame Biblical interpretation in the light of experience – on the first side of the divide. The interpretive work is relativistic – that is each individual eventually makes their own interpretation. This comes from a generally well-meaning point of view – it has however not convinced me to reject God’s Word and nearly 2000 years of understanding that homosexual behavior is sinful behavior and is contrary to God’s Word and God’s purpose and desire for human beings. And that is exactly what these votes at the Churchwide Assembly have done.

There are two other parts to the matrix that Pastor Dan Taylor shared.

The Radically Opposed group are a smaller minority – an example for that group is not even an ELCA congregation, but rather the Westboro Baptist congregation from Kansas who are infamous for their horrible protests at funerals of servicemen. Although they see God’s Word as authoritative, they approach the Scripture from a literalistic interpretive

lens. The focus is on the Condemnation for Sins – and especially they focus on condemnation for homosexuals.

The Moderately Opposed perspective in regards to this issue view the Bible as the Authoritative Word of God but also use a variety of interpretive rules that were outlined in presentation #1. Some of the more important rules are the reading of scripture with a plain sense understanding – that is – it means what it says unless there is the use of metaphor. But most importantly the centrality of Christ and his salvation work that is justification for the sinner by a gift of grace. Also, the distinction between Law and Gospel – that is some scripture certainly reveals our sins and leaves us with our brokenness except for the Gospel of Jesus Christ that raises us from death in our sins to new life. The term limited inerrancy has been used and it reflects an understanding that the Bible is trustworthy, it is the authoritative Word of God, but it is not a science or history book because of limited understandings of the Biblical authors for science or the scope of history.

For the moderately opposed, they do emphasize a love for all people. There is an understanding that the Grace of God forgives sinners and that we are all sinners. This love for all people also understands that you cannot bless behavior that is not in accordance with God's Will (ex. adultery, addiction, theft, abuse, etc.) All people are called to repentance, and will receive forgiveness and new life in Christ.

Also – let me speak to several Biblical Analogies that are often used as comparisons to argue against the Bible's long-standing consensus that homosexual behavior is sinful behavior. These analogies play an influential role in the debate and I will take the time to outline them for you.

First is the inclusion of the Gentiles in the early church. In Acts chapter 15 we read that the early church struggled with the issue of whether to include gentiles (which are any people who are not Jews).

Some in the early church argued that Gentiles could not become part of the church unless they converted to Judaism first – which included circumcision for the males. In Acts 10 – we have Peter's revelation from God with the vision of the sheets filled with unclean animals and the invitation from God and to kill and eat and the admonition to not call anything impure that God has made clean. Well – we know that this heroic struggle was successful for the inclusion of the Gentiles – or else none of us would be part of the Christian church today. Today, some make the comparison for the inclusion of practicing homosexuals in the rites of unions and marriages and for the inclusion of practicing homosexuals to serve as pastors in the Church. Some say that if the church does not affirm same-sex unions and pastors who are in these same-sex unions then they are alienated just as the Gentiles were once alienated. But an analogy by definition is a comparison of like things or like situations. There is a great confusion because they are not similar. Racial and ethnic identity are inherited and although there may be some genetic markers that scientists have found that are part of a complex matrix of factors – which include intrauterine hormone levels, and familial and social factors that get reinforced by choices; these lead to a particular blend of impulses that result in repeated

homosexual behaviors that are reinforced and eventually assumed to be natural and the condition is thought to have always been there.

People want to argue for inclusion of homosexual practice which has no uniform approval – but rather has a consistent message in both the New Testament and the Old Testament of disapproval. On the other hand, in the Old Testament there is precedent for including Gentiles and this is reinforced in the New Testament with overall approval of Gentile inclusion in the church without forced circumcision. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit caused the early Christians to re-read the Scriptures that speak to God's covenant with Abraham. They didn't trust their human experience – but instead searched in God's Word to find something that was present even before their human experience. They desired for God's Word to interpret their experience – not the other way around. We see that in God's covenant and commitment to Abraham the intention was that this covenant would bless all nations – so that Gentiles would also come into a relationship with the Lord.

A second analogy that is often misused is the Slavery analogy. Some people want to compare the rejection of slavery as the setting aside of a Biblical encouragement to have slaves – and if slavery could be rejected then we should also reject the prohibition against homosexual behavior and same-sex unions.

There are several reasons why this is a poor comparison or analogy. One is that there is no clear biblical mandate that says that slavery is a good thing. Yes, the Old Testament and the New Testament both describe the practice of slavery in their cultures. Old Testament – Jewish Law put restrictions on enslaving fellow Jews, created the right to redeem your near kin, the right to treat slaves as hired laborers, mandatory release dates (the Year of Jubilee) and that runaway slaves were not to be returned to their masters. In the New Testament – Paul speaks of freedom from the slavery to sin – but also he speaks to the preferred freedom from social slavery. Nowhere does Scripture command or encourage slavery – so when Christians in the 18th and 19th Centuries struggled with and finally rejected slavery they were not over-turning a Biblical mandate that enforced slavery – but they were overturning centuries of cultural practice that had been misreading the Bible.

But the Bible is clear in its condemnation of homosexuality – and its encouragement of marriage between one man and one woman. Simply put, it is misleading and confusing to speak of both slavery and the condemnation of homosexuality as precedents in Scripture.

Third analogy that is misused is the Women in Ministry comparison. For centuries the Church around the world did not ordain women, but that traditional practice was questioned in the 20th century and the Biblical texts were examined to see how they could interpret our human experience. There were several instances in scripture of women in leadership positions as well as a few instances with a prohibition against women in leadership. But there was nowhere in scripture where a woman behaving as a woman was considered sinful. Of course, gender is innate – that is genetic and established in the womb. Also, a woman having sexual desire for a man is considered natural and good. Whereas the homosexual behavior as I previously spoke of is a result of a variety of factors which produce behavior that can be increased or decreased or by some therapies it

may be changed. Therefore we can not use the women in ministry as a comparison because they are different categories -

The fourth common analogy used to compare with homosexuality is the question of divorce and remarriage. There is no question that the Bible speaks of divorce as sin, especially in the New Testament. Jesus' words reinforce that marriage is for one man and one woman and that divorce is a tearing apart of that "one flesh" relationship. It is also true that the traditional prohibitions and shame about divorce have decreased in recent years, that is unfortunate and may have led to the greater incidence of divorce. But it is also true that although sinful and unfortunate – in some cases – esp. of abuse, divorce is necessary for safety reasons. We know from scripture that divorce is sinful, it is not commanded or encouraged or condoned. It is forgivable, but nonetheless a sinful experience. So when the argument is made that the changing view of divorce and remarriage is analogous to changing our views on homosexuality, then we must ask in all seriousness. Have we made an error in our easiness and lack of shame about divorce? The answer is yes – we have and we should not magnify that error by changing our views and tolerating other sinful behavior but instead call sinful behavior what it is and hold to the possibility for redeeming and forgiving love of Jesus for all those who repent of sinful behavior.

Some people – who completely misunderstand the situation – are asking why are we focusing on this one behavior and calling it sinful. Truly – that is not our intention, and in fact, last week Pastor Taylor highlighted that there are plenty of sexual behaviors that are abusive and exploitive and just downright sinful. We need to be aware of these also – but homosexual behavior has become a focus because of these Votes that occurred at the Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis this past August.

What were the decisions voted on at the August Churchwide Assembly: Review

This taskforce created a Social Statement that opposed sexual abuse in any form, opposed marital infidelity **but supported** Gay and Lesbian sexuality in monogamous, committed relationships. This departed from the current understanding by many in the church that sex outside of marriage between one man and one woman was sinful.

The Assembly voted to accept the Social Statement on Human Sexuality(2/3 vote required and passed by exactly 2/3) and then also voted to accept 4 resolutions on Ministry policies.

Resolution 3 was voted on first and asked this church whether, in the future implementation of these commitments, it will make decisions so that all in this church bear the burdens of the other, and **respect the bound consciences of all.**
Yes- 771; No-230

Resolution 1 asked the assembly whether, in principle, this church is committed to finding ways to **allow congregations that choose** to do so to recognize, support and hold publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships.
Yes – 619; No-402

[That means establishing two lists of congregations – those that can and will choose recognize and support [that means either civil unions are blessed or in states that allow it – marriages of same-sex couples can be in ELCA congregations) and of course, to allow congregations to also choose not to bless or marry gay and lesbian couples.

Resolution 2 asked the assembly whether, in principle, this church is committed to finding a way for people in such publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as professional leaders of this church.

Yes- 559; No-451

[That means allowing gay and lesbians in accountable and monogamous relationships (civil unions or gay marriages) to serve as ordained pastors.]

Resolution 4 asked the Church to bring into conformity all policies and procedures of the ELCA with Resolutions 1 and 2. (Implementation)

Yes-667; No-307

Lets first deal with the consequences of Resolution 3 – that was voted on first. This is a call to **respect the bound conscience of each person**. Some in the church bind their consciences to the Word of God and they see that the Authority of Scripture has priority where others in the church bind their conscience to themselves and their interpretation of the Scriptures. As I have spoken of before – there is a continental divide occurring within our denomination on the Authority of Scripture. For enough voting members and consequently for all of us, there is no longer authoritative biblical or theological guidelines for the ELCA. This resolution to respect the bound conscience of all – of each person is a claim that any sincerely believed conviction about the Bible or doctrine must be respected. So there is no longer absolute truth, this has been reduced to sincerely believed opinion.

And although the advocates and the Bishop and the Bishop's staff talk a good talk – outside the walls of Bethany, Pastor Taylor and myself have attended recent meetings of clergy where the pastors who hold to belief that the Bible is Authoritative and is the source and norm for faith and life have been marginalized and made to feel unchurched. The advocates for these resolutions do not feel much pressure to respect others since they got their way and at least a partial number of them believe that this is just a good first step with further changes to come to benefit Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgender persons. This is the truth in all human organizations where politics of power regularly occur. It sounds good – respect is a behavior all of us are trained to have. But in this environment where the individual's opinion or interpretation is now the authority, the ones who are thought to be superior, either intellectually or politically – finally by their perceived superiority they determine what the Bible actually says on this question concerning homosexuality. They say the Bible is ambiguous – it is not clear – so let us experts teach you. Then let us tell you about our personal experiences and show you that our personal experiences with homosexual persons have not been harmful or scary – why should you fear this change and if you do fear this change we are going to slap a label of “homophobic” upon you.

The next resolution – Resolution number 1 – does say that it allows for each congregation to choose to do so to recognize, support and hold publicly accountable life long monogamous same-gender relationships.

What has been accomplished is this – by a vote of 619 yes to 402 no votes – The Word of God no longer shapes and controls at least part of the ELCA. Those congregations that would bless and marry same-sex couples set themselves up as an authority and the sixth commandment has lost all of its bearing – now individual congregations can dismiss what they longer respect – God’s determination that there are limits to sexuality.

Sure you can say – we at Bethany or other congregations, we will choose to live under the Authority of God’s Word and that is our choice – but what about some of our most basic doctrine as Lutherans.

Many if not most of you have not heard of the Augsburg Confession. As Lutheran pastors we are asked to confess the Lutheran Confessions as true witnesses and faithful exposition of the Holy Scriptures. The Lutheran reformers in 1530 were called to appear in Augsburg, Germany. The theologians of Wittenberg, including Luther and Melancthon, were compelled to defend themselves against the Four hundred and Four propositions by Catholic theologian, Johann Eck, which lumped Luther’s teachings in with the teaching of Zwingli and others to give the impression that Luther’s teaching affirmed most of the heresies known to the church. Luther would have preferred to defend the accusations himself, but Luther was under a condemnation from the Roman Emperor and could not travel to Augsburg for fear of execution, so Philip Melancthon and a host of dukes and margraves – leaders of cities and a league of Lutheran governors essentially prepared this series of 21 articles on doctrinal topics and seven articles on reform in the Catholic church. This took several weeks of preparation and then seven Lutheran princes and two municipal governments presented the Augsburg Confession to Roman Emperor Charles V.

The foundational articles include such basics as Article one about God, and article two about original sin, and the next articles concerning the Son of God, Justification, the Office of Preaching and concerning New Obedience, this brings us to

the Seventh Article – which states that it is taught that there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the Holy Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For it is enough for the true unity of the Christian church that there the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word.

All of this is to reference how simply Lutheran’s define unity – unity doesn’t depend on having uniform ceremonies instituted by human beings. But unity depends on the Gospel preached and the Sacraments administered.

But how can the ELCA by passing a resolution of Respecting the individual’s Bound Conscience assert that we still have the Unity spoken of in the Augsburg Confession. –

There are such vast differences in opinion that we as a congregation can no longer be assured that some congregations are preaching the Gospel with harmony – to be in agreement since they are stating completely contradictory viewpoints on what is to be Blessed by God and What is Sinful Behavior.

Unfortunately, some of these congregations who are Affirming and Blessing same-sex couples are also departing from other core Biblical beliefs. This is evidenced even on the ELCA.org website. After stating many core beliefs surrounding the concept of salvation, the ELCA website affirms theologian Carl Braaten and his words.

For ELCA Lutherans, Braaten's words ring true: "The special quality of Jesus' uniqueness is best grasped in terms of his universal meaning. This concrete person, Jesus of Nazareth, is unique because of his unequalled universal significance. The point of his uniqueness underlines his universality. If Jesus is the Lord and Savior, he is the universal Lord and Savior, not merely my personal Lord and Savior. Because Jesus is the unique and universal Savior, there is a large hope for salvation, not only for me and others with the proper credentials of believing and belonging to the church, but for all people whenever or wherever they might have lived and no matter how religious or irreligious they may have proved to be themselves. It is clearly God's announced will that all people shall be saved and come to the knowledge of truth (1 Timothy 2:4)."

Underline added by Pastor Scott Meier

This would seem to be adding something to what has been previously taught about salvation – Augsburg IV states we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit or work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of Grace for Christ's sake through faith, when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us.

Underline added by Pastor Scott Meier

The ELCA website is either blatantly universalistic or they intend by some word games to come so close that most plain sense readings of this passage by Braaten would see this as universalism.

What does that mean? To be a universalist is to go beyond the belief that it is God's intention to save all people because of God's great love for the world – but then to go to the next step and say that no matter what – God will save all people, no matter if you believe or if you don't, if you are part of church through baptism or if you are not. They use the phrase "there is a large hope for salvation" – which seems to speak to what is God's intention, and then state no matter if you religious or without a religion(irreligious) it is God's will that all people shall be saved.

Is this unity for congregations who believe in the traditional Lutheran understanding of the Authority of God's Word, who believe that the Confessions accurately state that we receive forgiveness when we believe that Christ has suffered for us - is this unity to maintain a Churchwide relationship with other congregations who believe so differently.

And there are other areas of concern with in the ELCA and it social and moral policies. But these are quite foundational – don't you think.

The next Resolution, #2, asked the assembly whether, in principle, this church is committed to finding a way for people in such publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as professional leaders of this church. Yes- 559; No-451

What are the implications? This is a continuation of Resolution #1 – if the church can bless or marry same-sex couples – then an individual in that relationship should fall into the categories the ELCA has previously used to define who can be clergy – If you are single, you are to be chaste and if you are married you are to be faithful to your husband or wife.

What will be the ministry policies that result from this resolution? It would seem for now, that the ELCA will keep two lists of clergy and two lists of congregations. Why do I say for now, well – because the leadership of the ELCA and many leading theologians at seminaries of the ELCA fall into that category of Radically Supporting these changes and they have been pushing for equality and fairness for homosexual persons – and they will not regard the two lists of clergy and two lists of congregations as fair. It only seems to follow that those congregations that are part of the ELCA but refuse to recognize and support (to bless or marry) same-sex couples and regard them as candidates to serve as pastors in their congregations will have pressure put on them over time to conform to this Gospel of Acceptance.

The final resolution is about changing the ELCA's policies and procedures to conform with Resolutions 3, 1 and 2. And of course, that only makes sense.

So what other consequences are likely within the ELCA.

1. Seminaries and Colleges of the ELCA of which a number of Bethany members and family members are graduates will become even more free to promote homosexuality as a blessed behavior as long as the couple is married. Already even my alma mater, Wartburg College has a student organization on campus that is pro-homosexual.

2. Haven't some gay and lesbian persons who refused to abide by ELCA standards been ordained anyway? Aren't some of them serving in ELCA congregations?

Yes. In recent years several persons have chosen not to comply with the ELCA constitution by refusing to follow the ELCA process for the approval and ordination of candidates for ministry and by seeking an unconstitutional ordination service, but they have sought to serve in ELCA congregations.

An organization called Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries has “approved” the ordinations of several individuals who have refused to abide by the ELCA’s standards for the conduct of pastors. ELM reports on its website that it “credentials and rosters qualified candidates of all sexual orientations and gender identities for ministry.” The participants in these ordinations have acted in ways that violate the ELCA constitution. The ELCA constitution states that “An ordained minister shall comply with the constitution of this church” and that “ordained ministers shall be subject to discipline for . . . willfully disregarding the provisions of the constitution or bylaws of this church” (*ELCA Constitution C7.22, C20.21.01*).

ELCA congregations must “agree to call pastoral leadership from the clergy roster of this church in accordance with the call procedures of this church except in special circumstances and with the approval of the synodical bishop.” “A congregation that maintains as its pastor an ordained minister who has resigned or been removed from this church’s roster of ordained ministers or that calls as its pastor one who has not been approved for the roster of ordained ministers may be removed from the roster of congregations of this church by the Synod Council upon recommendation of the synodical bishop” (*ELCA Constitution C9.21, C9.23*).

Vision and Expectations: Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America explains:

“Pastoral identity carries with it expectations and accountabilities that are determined by the whole Church and not simply by a given congregation, synod, institution, or agency served by the ordained minister.”

Wouldn’t it be OK to just let each congregation do what it wants regarding same-sex unions and pastors?

No. The ELCA has committed itself to be one church with one clergy roster and one set of standards for pastors. Such a change would divide the ELCA into a confederation of congregations or synods — each with its own standards for pastors and other rostered leaders — rather than one church.

Changing church policy to allow some ELCA pastors to be in same-sex sexual relationships would require the entire ELCA to agree that the Bible is not clear in its teaching about marriage and about homosexual behavior. It would, in effect, change the source and norm of the ELCA’s faith and life from the Bible to something else. If **the desire to avoid conflict** or to keep the ELCA together is the most important thing in the ELCA and defines our teaching and practice, it would become the source and norm of our faith and life rather than Scripture.

Could the acceptance of same-sex sexual relationships affect our relationship with Lutheran Churches in other parts of the world?

Yes. Leaders of Lutheran churches throughout the world — especially leaders of Lutheran churches in Africa — have asked the ELCA to remain committed to Scripture and to accepted Christian teaching on sexuality. For example, the bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania issued a statement in 2004 affirming traditional Biblical understandings of sexuality and challenging those who would change Christian teaching on homosexual behavior.

Could the acceptance of same-sex sexual relationships affect our relationship with other Christians?

Yes. If the ELCA would reject traditional Christian teaching on sexuality, it would place the ELCA at odds with the vast majority of the world's Christians. This would hurt our ecumenical efforts with several Christian traditions. It would severely damage our relationship with the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church as well as our relationship with most Protestant denominations.

Isn't the acceptance of gay and lesbian people about the Gospel?

The Gospel is the good news of Jesus as Savior and Lord. God's love is for all people. Gay and lesbian people — like all people — are welcome in the church as fellow sinners loved by and redeemed by Christ.

Some people have confused acceptance and affirmation with the Gospel of God's love in Jesus Christ. They have substituted a "different gospel" of acceptance and affirmation for the Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture. The Bible tells the story of human sinfulness and God's forgiveness. Jesus' death for us shows God's love and at the same time reveals our sinfulness. As a seminary professor once put it, "If Jesus died for you that must mean you're a sinner." Jesus does not die to justify our sins but rather to save us from them.

The question before the ELCA is not whether gay and lesbian persons are welcome in the church. All people are welcome because Jesus died for all. All people are welcome on the same basis — as human beings — sinners who need a Savior. Those asking for the acceptance of same-sex sexual relationships are not asking for acceptance and welcome as forgiven sinners. They are asking that same-sex sexual activity not be considered sinful and saying that they do not need God's forgiveness for homosexual behavior.

Questions for Discussion:

If it has taken at least 25 years for ELCA leaders in Churchwide and Synod and Congregations to accomplish these Resolutions 1-4,
How long will it take to raise up leaders in Churchwide, Synod and Congregations in order to oppose or even over-turn these votes of the ELCA?

What will be the future of the ELCA?

What do you believe is necessary for Unity in the Church?

Do you feel that your conscience is Bound to God's Word? Do you feel respected in the ELCA?