

H -- Memorial Offering Guidance for ELCA Pastors and Congregations Regarding Services of Same-Gender Unions

RESOLVED, that this Synod, meeting in Assembly, direct the Synod Council to submit a resolution to the ELCA Church Council to adopt and offer the following guidance to pastors and congregations as they “discern ways to provide faithful pastoral care for all to whom they minister”:

Guidance for Services of Blessing the Union of a Same-Gender Couple

1. We define a “Service of Blessing the Union of a Same-Gender Couple” as a prayerful invoking of God’s care, mercy, and presence upon a couple so as to the strengthen their promises of lifelong love and fidelity.
2. Such a Service of Blessing can occur in either a private or public setting. The couple may desire a private setting where only the pastor and perhaps few others are present to offer a prayer of Blessing, or they may choose to have the Blessing be part of a public service of worship.
3. Such a Service of Blessing shall include these essential elements: (a) a mutual exchange of promises of lifelong love and fidelity, or an affirmation of promises previously exchanged in a civil ceremony; (b) an invocation of the Triune God to be present in the strengthening and the fulfillment of the promises exchanged; and (c) a prayer of Blessing offered by the pastor (and, if appropriate, the congregation) and a pledge to support the couple in the fulfillment of their promises.
4. In preparation for the Service of Blessing, we encourage: (a) consultation between pastor and congregation council prior to the first occasion for a Service of Blessing to determine congregational policy for such services; (b) prayerful and intentional preparation by the couple with the pastor before the Service of Blessing; and (c) the demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) in the life of the couple;

and be it further

RESOLVED, that this Synod, meeting in Assembly, direct the Synod Council to submit a resolution to the ELCA Church Council to direct the ELCA Worship and Liturgical Resources section to collect and make available for use throughout this church various forms of Service of Blessing the Union of a Same-Gender Couple that have been used by congregations of this church and elsewhere.