

WordAlone Workshop Outline

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Sample criteria for selecting a Lutheran Church body to join

"Homosexuality: What the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions Have to Say"
- resource published by SOLA Publishing

Discussion

ALC Process for Leaving the ELCA

American Lutheran Church (ALC) of Long Prairie, MN made a decision to investigate the possibility of leaving the ELCA after the August 2009 ELCA Church Wide Assembly adopted *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*. We chose to make the process a deliberately careful one to insure that we thoroughly educate our congregation on the issues. ALC has been a WordAlone congregation since 2002, and thus has been aware of the ELCA's slow migration away from scriptural teachings and the Lutheran Confessions. This made the process a much easier task than would be for congregations which were unaware of the 10 year long process the ELCA had been involved in developing and promoting human sexuality statements and study documents.

The first step ALC took was an immediate moratorium on our benevolence giving to the ELCA while we studied the question regarding our continued affiliation with the ELCA. This was done by a vote of the Church Council. Note that this was a moratorium on giving and not a decision to no longer financially support the ELCA.

Second, the Church Council formed a 10 person Study Committee from volunteers interested in the issue. The council tasked the committee to:

- 1.) "Feel" the pulse of the congregation regarding the decisions of the 2009 ELCA Church Wide Assembly. This was accomplished through an initial congregational survey mailed to every member asking their opinion on the three main resolutions adopted by the assembly. Each resolution was stated in as accurate a way as possible, and the members were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the resolutions. The results of the first survey gave the Study Committee a sense of the congregation's thoughts and feelings regarding each issue.

- 2.) The second task was to educate the congregation regarding the issues and options we had regarding departing the ELCA. This was done through information made available on an information table in the church narthex, through newsletters, and most importantly through meetings held between worship services as a part of Adult Education classes. We called these "Time to Talk" sessions, which were just that.. ..time to listen and allow members to ask questions, exchange opinions, and to generally learn what the issues involved were so they could eventually make an informed decision for themselves. We made sure the process was slow enough to not leave anyone "behind", yet rapid enough to discourage anyone who disagreed strongly with the ELCA Church Wide Assembly decisions from leaving the congregation or suspending their regular giving to anything other than the ELCA. We held the Time to Talk sessions for as long as it took for

people to feel informed and have an opportunity to express themselves.

3.) Finally, the Church Council tasked the Study Committee to make a recommendation to the Church Council regarding our continued affiliation with the ELCA.

After about two months of gaining the feelings of the congregation and educating them through the means described above, the Study Committee made the following recommendation:

That American Lutheran Church of Long Prairie sever our affiliation with the ELCA and join another Lutheran Church body.

The Church Council accepted that recommendation and scheduled a special congregational meeting to take the first vote regarding our continued affiliation. The congregation voted by a 92% majority to leave the ELCA and join another Lutheran body to be determined by the second vote required by the ELCA constitution.

We are now in the process of determining which Lutheran body we wish to affiliate with through a similar process of education and "Time to Talk" sessions in which the congregation has input in the selection process.

We feel that the most important part of this successful process has been the slow deliberate education of the congregation prior to asking them to make a decision. The Study Committee was very careful to remain neutral on the issues while seeking the input of the membership. We remained listeners to each and every member's opinions and offered complete openness to all to participate. By the time the first vote was taken, we felt certain that all had been given the opportunity to be heard and to educate themselves.

American Lutheran Church is willing to provide other information regarding this process. Please contact us at 320-732-2932 or by email at alclp@embarqmail.com. Pastor Bill Bakewicz, ALC Pastor

Step by Step Outline of a Process to decide whether or not to leave the ELCA

- August , 2009 ELCA ChurchWide Assembly adopts *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* thereby changing its teaching and policy regarding homosexual behavior.
- September, 2009 Church Council approves a moratorium on giving to the ELCA
An information table is set up with information on the issues from both the ELCA and WordAlone perspectives
Church Council approves the establishing of a Study Committee.
The purpose of the Study Committee is twofold: first, to take the pulse of the congregation regarding the August ELCA ChurchWide Assembly decisions: second, to educate the congregation regarding the issues and to recommend possible options for leaving the ELCA if that is desired
All members of the congregation are invited to submit their names to serve on the Study Committee
10 members volunteer to serve on the Study Committee and the Church Council approves all 10 members. (Open process)
- October, 2009 The Study Committee begins its work.
Congregational survey is mailed first class to all members
The syndical bishop is present and preaches at both worship services on a Sunday morning. A forum is held between the worship services with the bishop for a time of dialogue about concerns, questions, etc.
- November, 2009 “Time to Talk” sessions begin on Sunday morning during the Sunday School Hour.
Once there is a sense that things are “talked out”, a poll is taken to get a pulse on the congregation if they are ready to leave the ELCA or not. The poll reveals that more than 84% wish to leave the ELCA
The Study Committee drafts a resolution to leave the ELCA and submits this resolution to the Church Council.
The Church Council approves the resolution and sets a December date for a Special Congregational Meeting to vote on the resolution
A letter is sent to all members announcing the Special Meeting date in December along with a copy of the resolution to be voted on
“Time to Talk” sessions continue

- December, 2009 At the Special Congregational Meeting, the resolution passes by a 92% vote to leave the ELCA
The bishop is notified by certified letter of the resolution and the results of the first vote
- January, 2010 The Study Committee works on which Lutheran Church bodies should be looked at as potential bodies to join.
Four Lutheran Church bodies are chosen as “good fits” for the congregation
- February, 2010 The Study Committee prepares information on each of the four Lutheran Church bodies and makes the information available via monthly church newsletter and information table.
Consultation with the synod bishop is held. The meeting is open to all members. (Constitutional requirement)
- March, 2010 “Time to Talk” Sessions resume on Sunday morning
- April, 2010 “Time to Talk” Sessions continue.
Once there is a sense that things are “talked out”, a poll is taken to get the pulse of the congregation as to which Lutheran Church body would be the best fit for the congregation.
- May, 2010 Second Special Congregational meeting is held to vote on the “Resolution to leave the ELCA and join another Lutheran Church body“. A second resolution to join a specific Lutheran Church body is also voted on. The bishop or his representative is present at the meeting.

November 27,2009

Dear fellow members.

Upon the recommendation of our Study Committee., our Church Council has set a date for a Special Congregational Meeting to be held on Sunday, December 13th at 12:30 p.m., following a potluck meal after the 10:30 a.m. worship service, for the purpose of voting upon the following resolution:

**Resolution to leave the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)
and join another Lutheran Church body**

Whereas our Confession of Faith, Article II of the Constitution of American Lutheran Church, Long Prairie, Minnesota states:

"The congregation accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed and inerrant Word of God, revealed for salvation of humanity, and submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.", and

Whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) at its 2009 Church Wide Assembly, through the adoption of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* changed its teaching and policy in such a way as to not be in agreement with our Confession of Faith in so far as the ELCA now approves of same-sex unions and the ordaining of pastors in same-sex unions, and

Whereas this action of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has removed the ELCA from the universal Christian consensus on marriage and homosexual behavior and has departed from the teaching of the Bible as understood by Christians for 2,000 years, therefore

Be it resolved, that American Lutheran Church, Long Prairie, Minnesota, end its membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and join another Lutheran Church body in which our Confession of Faith and our witness to the Gospel will not be compromised.

According to our constitution and the constitution of the ELCA. in order for our congregation to leave the ELCA, two separate Special Congregational meetings need to be held for that purpose at least 90 days apart from one another in which a minimum two thirds vote to leave is attained at each meeting.

Our Study Committee has looked at all of our options and has recommended that we take a close look at six different Lutheran Church bodies as potential church bodies for us to become members of if we decide to leave the ELCA. We have accepted that recommendation. An in depth look at each viable option would take place between the first and second Special Congregational meetings (which need to be at least 90 days

apart). A decision as to which church body to join would be made at a second Special Congregational meeting sometime in the Spring of 2010 if a minimum two thirds majority vote is cast to leave the ELCA at that meeting also. A minimum two thirds majority vote needs to be cast at the Special Congregational meeting on Sunday, December 13th in order for our congregation to initiate the process of leaving the ELCA and take the next step to have a second meeting to be held in the Spring of 2010 to again vote to leave the ELCA and join another Lutheran church body.

Between now and December 13th, our Sunday morning "Time to Talk" during the Sunday School hour will be devoted to begin looking at these viable options as well as continue to field your comments, thoughts and concerns. If we decide to leave the ELCA and join another Lutheran Church body we WILL retain ownership of our church building and property.

As we go through this process, I encourage you to continue to talk and listen to one another, and to pray and seek the Lord about these things, hi all that we do, it is our intent to do all to the glory of God and for the good of American Lutheran Church.

Sincerely,

Patty Ostendorf. President

Membership / History

What is their Statement of faith?

Describe the organizational structure

Do they practice open communion?

What is the role of women?

Describe their preferred worship style

What is their process for pastoral call/certification?

Education Resources/ Publishing

Youth Ministry

Women's Ministry Missions