



Lutheran Church International

Central Office – 1124 South Fifth St, LL-C, Springfield, Illinois 62704

Founded 1967

The Most Rev. Robert W. Hotes, Ph. D., D. Min
Archbishop

An Affirmation by the Archbishop Regarding Marriage, Celibacy and Participation in the Life in Christ within the Lutheran Church-International

In the Name of the Father, the ✠Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

A recent decision by a body of beloved fellow Lutheran Christians has prompted questions regarding the LC-I's understanding with regard to marriage, celibacy and life within the family of Christ as experienced in the LC-I. We in the LC-I wish to express our love and regard for all persons, especially love and respect for our sisters and brothers in other Lutheran bodies. But love must at times demand a clear statement of firmly held principles and values.

The LC-I is an evangelical catholic body, a constituent part of the church universal, as Luther and the reformers understood it. We understand that we are all sinners, but are saved by faith alone, through God's grace alone, according to the Word of Scripture alone, through the sole sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's Son. We subscribe to the teachings contained in the Book of Concord because they are accurate expositions of the content of Scripture. The following points pertain to interpersonal relationships within the church.

- ❖ Based on our Scriptural understanding, we are bound to extend love and acceptance to all humankind, without compromising our faith or moral principles as we see them delineated in Scripture.
- ❖ We understand that Christ's Kingdom is inclusive. We welcome all with joy.
- ❖ We will not change our values or norms to suit merely human desires.
- ❖ We understand and affirm that we are not to judge the hearts and minds of others, but that Christ has bestowed the keys of forgiveness of sin upon His church.
- ❖ We affirm that the church has the right and the obligation to teach norms of behavior.
- ❖ We understand and affirm that marriage is a blessed estate based upon a contract between one man and one woman.
- ❖ We understand and affirm that those who do not marry may choose a holy state of celibacy. We do not accept willful and open expression of other relationships of a sexual nature as normative within the LC-I. Open participation in such relationships constitutes an impediment to ordination and/or life in a professed religious community, as both are signs of explicit moral approval of the church body. Therefore the LC-I does not approve those with overtly homosexual lifestyles for orders or profession of vows in religious life. Neither does the LC-I approve those who manifestly engage in heterosexual behaviors outside of the wedded state for orders or profession in the religious life.
- ❖ We affirm that life in the Christian community must bear witness to the understandings of the Christian community.

Let us continue in charity, with firmness in the Faith. Here we stand. We can do none other.

++*Robert*

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