

## **BC Synod to Push Sexuality Issues at Upcoming Convention**

The BC Synod's Faith and Society Committee will be bringing two motions related to the controversial sexuality issues before this church to the BC Synod's upcoming Convention to be held April 17-20 in Kelowna [1].

The first motion from the Faith and Society Committee that the delegates to the BC Synod Convention will be asked to consider is: "Be it moved that the BC Synod affirm that people of all sexual orientations [2] and gender identities share the worth that comes from being created by God and are welcomed into the full life of the synod".

While this motion is wrapped in warm and fuzzy language of "welcoming" and appears intentionally ambiguous as to content and intent, if read very carefully, particularly the reference to "welcomed into the full life of the synod", then the apparent underlying purpose becomes clear, namely, to affirm such behaviours including the blessing of same-sex unions and the ordination of people in such relationships. The parceling of the 'welcome' motion together with a second motion encouraging congregations to become Lutherans Concerned 'Reconciling in Christ' (RIC) congregations ("We as a synod encourage congregations to go through the process of study which will enable them to consider becoming a Reconciling in Christ Congregation".) further reveals the true intent of the first motion. Hopefully, the congregations who are encouraged to become an RIC congregation will not be deceived into believing that RIC is simply about 'welcoming' (<http://www.solid-ground.ca/a-ric.htm>).

With the proposed 'welcome' statement, in effect what the leadership of the BC Synod is trying to do is to follow in the footsteps of the Eastern Synod which became an RIC Synod in 2004. Thus, it's instructive and helpful to review the history of what happened in the Eastern Synod.

At the Eastern Synod's 2002 Convention a motion was passed giving notice that a 'welcome' statement, drafted by Lutherans Concerned - North America (<http://www.lcna.org/>), would be brought before the 2004 Convention for adoption. Its members were encouraged to use the intervening two years to study and reflect on this motion. [Likewise at the 2006 BC Synod Convention notice was given that a 'welcome' statement would be brought before the 2008 BC Synod Convention: "Be it resolved, in preparation for the consideration of a welcoming motion to the next convention of the B.C. Synod that pastors and congregations be encouraged to continue discussion and learning regarding welcoming all persons, including gay and lesbian persons, and we invite this Synod to be involved in a two year period of intentional prayer study and discernment"] By the time that the 2004 Eastern Synod Convention came around, the Eastern Synod Council, recognizing that linking the 2002 'welcome' statement to Lutherans Concerned might be a "stumbling block" to its acceptance, prepared a substitute 'welcome' statement to put before the delegates to the 2004 Synod Convention. It was that motion, wrapped in the legal language of human rights legislation, that was easily passed with 289 (78%) delegates voting in favour and 79 opposed (<http://www.solid-ground.ca/a-eastsynodbless.htm>). The story didn't end there, however. Although the substitute motion, unlike the original 'welcome' motion, distanced itself from Lutherans Concerned, within a week of the Eastern Synod Convention having adopted the substitute 'welcome' statement, Lutherans Concerned designated the Eastern Synod to be a 'Reconciling in an RIC synod, the first such synod in

Canada to be so designated (<http://www.solid-ground.ca/a-eastsynoddeclarric.htm>). This unilateral action by Lutherans Concerned (<http://www.solid-ground.ca/a-lc-admit.htm>) was obligingly accepted by the Eastern Synod Council (<http://www.solid-ground.ca/a-eastsynoddeclines.htm>). Therefore, if the 'welcome' statement put forward by BC Synod's Faith and Society Committee is adopted by the delegates to the 2008 BC Synod Convention, then one can expect that the BC Synod will be designated as a RIC Synod, thus aligned with the goals and objectives of Lutherans Concerned ("Lutherans Concerned / North America works for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their Church and congregations".)

It is noteworthy that the BC Synod is taking such action despite the decisions made at the 2005 and 2007 National Conventions to turn down congregational and synodical 'local options', respectively, for conducting same-sex blessings, thus upholding this church's current teaching on these matters according to *A Statement on Sex, Marriage and the Family* (1970) [[http://www.elcic-lopp.ca/policies\\_400.shtml](http://www.elcic-lopp.ca/policies_400.shtml)]. In a July 2003 letter regarding "Same Sex Marriage" the national and synodical bishops of this church, including the BC Synod bishop, Gerhard Preibisch, cautioned that, "For the sake of unity and good order of the church, it is important that any change in this practice be authorized by this church acting together (*emphasis added*)". This church "acts together" at its National Conventions, which, according to the ELCIC Constitution (Article 11), are to be "its highest legislative authority". Furthermore, there is an understanding that any further initiatives would await the development of a new Social Statement on Human Sexuality by the ELCIC (<http://elcic.ca/Human-Sexuality/default.cfm>). Thus, the BC Synod's Faith and Society Committee by introducing these motions at this time, as was the case for the 2006 Eastern Synod Convention, reveals that the BC Synod chooses to walk apart from this church (ELCIC). Such defiant action encouraged by the leadership of the BC Synod does little to support the BC Synod's declared objective to "nurture the identity, unity and vision of the ELCIC" (<http://www.elcic.ca/Stewardship/People/BC-Synod-Ministry.cfm>) and threatens to undermine the already fragile unity of the ELCIC.

Notes:

[1] These motions were contained on page F-2 in the Bulletin of Reports that were sent out on March 17<sup>th</sup>. It is noteworthy that there was an announcement dated March 17<sup>th</sup> posted at the BC Synod web site <http://www.bcsynod.org/> stating "BC Synod Convention Bulletin of Reports are in the mail to congregations. Please distribute to all registered delegates!" Also included in this post was an indication that the Bulletin of Reports would "soon" be posted at the BC web site for downloading. About a week later this March 17<sup>th</sup> announcement was modified by removing the reference to posting the Bulletin of Reports at the web site and replacing it with the phrase, "If you suspect that there are missing pages, please call the synod office at (604) 524-1318". Does that mean that the BC Synod office has changed its mind about making the Bulletin of Reports available at the Synod's web site?

[2] Does the Faith and Society Committee realize how encompassing the phrase "all sexual orientations" is in their proposed 'welcome' statement? For example, see the following article describing, "22 Possible So-Called 'Sexual Orientations'":  
<http://www.familyaction.org/print.php?filename=Articles/issues/freedoms/bill-c250/22-possible.htm>