



Greater Milwaukee Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

A Pastoral Letter Affirming our LGBTQIA+ Siblings

Bishop Paul Erickson
Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
March 21, 2022

*“For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.”*
Psalm 139:13-14

Friends in Christ:

To be honest, there are a whole host of issues that have filled recent headlines that weigh heavy on my heart and mind: war in Ukraine, economic challenges, political division, and all of the uncertainties related to the pandemic. One issue, however, that has garnished significant attention, which I believe the gospel of Jesus Christ directly addresses, is the recent assault on the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly our transgender siblings. Recent legislative efforts and religious pronouncements have sought to portray these siblings and those who love and support them as criminal and sinful. This is contrary to what our church teaches and what I believe deep in my heart and soul. This is also contributing to a climate in which the rates of suicide and depression among transgender youth is truly alarming.¹ This is not about being politically correct; it’s about saving lives.

I’ll admit, my own understanding of what it means to be transgender has grown significantly in recent years, and there is still much that I don’t know and may never understand. But the gospel that saves and guides us is crystal clear: we are to love and serve and protect our neighbors. All of them.

Human sexuality, romantic love, and gender identity are amazing and complex gifts from God that defy simplistic understandings and rigid definitions. We are all “fearfully and wonderfully made,” and we are all on a journey of discovering what it means to live in loving and life-giving relationships. I call upon all our congregations and leaders to take the time to listen to and learn from those with differing gender identities and expressions, and to engage in the hard and holy work of ensuring that our communities truly embody grace, mercy, and radical welcome for all. Let’s work together so that all people everywhere hear this life-giving and life-changing message:

God meets you where you are.
God loves you as you are.

¹ “New Study Reveals Shocking Rates of Attempted Suicide Among Trans Adolescents,” Human Rights Campaign, <https://www.hrc.org/news/new-study-reveals-shocking-rates-of-attempted-suicide-among-trans-adolescenc>.

God will walk with you as you discover who you are.

In grace and hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul D. Erickson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bishop Paul Erickson

To learn more about providing safe and welcoming places for all, please be in touch with the Greater Milwaukee Synod Reconciling in Christ Team (ric@gmselca.org; <https://milwaukee-synod.org/reconciling-in-christ/>). Additional information and resources are available at Reconciling Works: <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/resources/sogie/>.