

HARASSMENT, ASSAULT, AND DISCRIMINATION DUE TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Social Policy Resolution
CC93.03.37



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

Adopted by the 1993 Church Council.

Whereas

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has committed itself to participate in God's mission by "adopting dignity and justice for all people" (ELCA 4.02.c); and

Whereas, in carrying out its mission, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America builds upon the legacy of policy positions it has inherited from its predecessor church bodies. These positions separated moral judgments regarding homosexual orientation and practice from a common concern for justice for all persons:

- In 1970, the Lutheran Church in America observed that homosexual persons "are often the special and undeserving victims of prejudice and discrimination in law, law enforcement, cultural mores, and congregational life." The social statement went on to declare "It is essential to see such persons as entitled to understanding and justice in church and community" ("Sex, Marriage, and Family"),
- In 1980, The American Lutheran Church noted with alarm that "persons thought to be homosexual are harassed, beaten, even killed." Its social statement declared that "ALC members must act against these evils in their communities." Furthermore, Christians "need to take leadership roles in changing public opinion, civil laws, and prevailing practices that deny justice and opportunity to any persons, homosexual or heterosexual." The concern "must be for laws that foster justice, mercy, equality of opportunity, and the protection of human rights . . . so long as . . . exercise of these rights does not infringe on the privacy and the civil and legal rights of other persons" ("Human Sexuality and Sexual Behavior"), and

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in its first social statement committed itself to "join with others to remove the obstacles of discrimination and indifference" ("The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective," 1991); and

Whereas, gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons today are particular targets of violent assault, as well as of verbal or physical harassment and other discriminatory practices due to their sexual orientation; therefore, be it

Resolved

RESOLVED, that the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reaffirms that the historical position of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is:

1. Strong opposition to all forms of verbal or physical harassment or assault of persons because of their sexual orientation; and
2. Support for legislation, referendums, and policies to protect the civil rights of all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation, and to prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, and public services and accommodations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that in keeping with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commitment to "foster moral deliberation" involving "those who feel and suffer with the issue" as well as "those whose interests or security are at stake" ("The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective," 1991), the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America encourages ongoing deliberation regarding the implications of this position in specific situations.