

From: Bishop Elizabeth Eaton [mailto:Bishop@elca.org]
Sent: Tuesday, September 18, 2018 1:36 PM
To: Charlton, David [email address deleted]
Subject: RE: Seminaries for Traditional Candidates

Yes, you may share this with others.

Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Office of the Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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From: Charlton, David [email address deleted]
Sent: Friday, September 14, 2018 11:01 AM
To: Bishop Elizabeth Eaton <Bishop@elca.org>
Subject: Re: Seminaries for Traditional Candidates

Bishop Eaton,

Thank you for your reply. May I share it with others? If you prefer that don't, I will not share it.

In Christ,

Pastor David Charlton

On Fri, Sep 14, 2018 at 10:37 AM, Bishop Elizabeth Eaton <Bishop@elca.org> wrote:
Dear Pr. Charlton,

Thank you for taking time to write and share the concerns and convictions you express in your recent letter.

The seminaries of this church have a robust history of equipping pastors for ministry in our congregations since the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and our predecessor church bodies. They have assumed their teaching vocation with integrity and responsibility during the cultural and societal struggles and changes that our expression of the One Church has witnessed over centuries. The ELCA seminaries classrooms and educational spaces have been a gathering place for conversation about

such issues. Seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are committed to continue being this gathering place where differences are acknowledged, every person respected, and our Lutheran traditions in its varied expressions is taught and honored.

ELCA seminaries that are Reconciling in Christ are committed to “value and embrace every person as a beloved child, recognizing that Spirit gives a diversity of gifts for the common good, and teaching that Jesus Christ calls us to work for justice. This means they support and accept people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, their families, friends, and allies, within the Lutheran communion and its ecumenical and global partners” (<https://www.reconcilingworks.org/about/>). This statement is not an either-or one but a both-and affirmation that **includes** persons with traditional understandings of the Christian faith and the Lutheran confessions and, persons with different understandings of human sexuality, gender and marriage issues.

Our seminaries are aware and committed to promote healthy and safe opportunities for all students as a respected part of these and other critical conversations. The seminaries have processes in place to address harassment to safeguard all students. The ELCA seminary faculties, as a guild, represent the rich variety of interpretive Lutheran confessional traditions. All students are welcome as part of our Lutheran confessional expression of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Likewise, ELCA congregations who hold traditional views about human sexuality will be able to find pastors that “meet their needs.”

I am grateful for your attentiveness to the church’s ministry and witness, and I give thanks to God for your service in Christ’s name.

God’s peace,

Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop

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From: Charlton, David [email address deleted]

Sent: Monday, September 3, 2018 10:50 PM

To: Bishop Elizabeth Eaton <Bishop@elca.org>
Subject: Seminaries for Traditional Candidates

September 3, 2018

Dear Bishop Eaton,

I am writing to ask whether the ELCA has any plan to assure that traditional Lutherans who would like to be ordained in the ELCA have the opportunity to receive a seminary education. In similar manner, are there plans to assure that traditional ELCA congregations will be able to find pastors who are willing to preach and teach in accordance the congregation's theological commitments. In 2009, we were urged to live together despite our disagreements. We were told that there would be room for people holding any of the four valid positions outlined in HSGT. The question today is whether there is indeed room for people holding traditional views on human sexuality.

This has become a concern for me and my congregation in the wake of the conflict at United Lutheran Seminary. That the president of ULS once considered homosexuality to be sinful was deemed harmful to LGBTQ persons and put the RIC status of that seminary in jeopardy. Reconciling Works seems to assume that RIC status means that traditional views on sexuality have been eliminated from an institution. If a person who rejected her past beliefs about homosexuality was deemed intolerable, what about people who still hold that belief? Is there room on the ULS faculty or in the ULS student body for people who hold positions 1 or 2 as described in the 2009 social statement on human sexuality? Currently, all ELCA seminaries but Luther are RIC. If, as is expected, Luther becomes a RIC seminary, will ELCA Lutherans who believe that homosexuality is sinful or who oppose same-sex marriage have an place in any of our seminaries?

If our seminaries are effectively closed to Lutherans having traditional views about human sexuality, where will such people be able to receive theological training? Where will traditional congregations find pastors that meet their needs?

I would like to be assured that traditional students are welcome at ELCA seminaries and are not subject harassment or undue pressure to change their views. I would like to be assured that theologians who hold traditional views are not excluded from consideration for teaching positions at our seminaries.

I look forward to your response and hope that my concerns are unfounded.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor David Charlton
St. Paul Lutheran Church
Niceville, Florida