

*LC/NA calls upon all members to reach out to at least two people regarding the decisions made at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.*

The first of the four "resolveds" of the policy recommendations considered by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly (CWA09) was the most important: to "love the neighbor" and "bear one another's burdens." With little debate, the assembly voted to adopt this first resolved. Overwhelmingly, the church has agreed to stay in relationship, to live together faithfully amidst our disagreements, and to work for reconciliation.

The work of reconciliation is at the core of the mission of Lutherans Concerned/North America (LC/NA). In this time after the assembly, there are some who are unsure about their involvement with the ELCA. In some cases, misunderstandings or hard feelings about the CWA09 decisions may be tempting some to disengage. In other cases, the CWA decisions present an "open door" for LGBT people and their families for the first time — even it may seem like the door is still not open wide enough. In all cases, we should resolve to reach out to others in love and grace, listening to their stories and telling our own so that we may come to renewed understanding together as the Body of Christ, overcoming estrangement and discord no matter what their sources may be.

### **Resolve to Reach Out**

There is much work to be done in congregations, at workplaces, at school, and among your extended networks of family and friends. LC/NA calls on all members to commit to personally contacting at least two people with whom you have already some relationship, including:

1. someone whom you know has felt confused or hurt by the actions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly; and
2. someone who has been made to feel alienated, in one way or the other, by the church's previous exclusionary policies and teachings

These people could be family members, members of your congregation, co-workers, classmates, whomever. The method of contact can take any form that allows for conversation: face-to-face visit, phone call, email, social networking (Facebook, etc....).

### **The Purpose**

- To make personal connections and build on relationships. Strong relationships are the key to all social and spiritual change.
- To celebrate (when appropriate) the changes in the ELCA and the hopeful future they point toward.
- To alleviate possible anxiety about the decisions made at CWA.
- To provide clarity, as necessary, about what the changes mean and don't mean.

## Conversation Starters

Here are some questions to help start conversation. You should be prepared to answer these questions yourself.

- Do you have any questions about the decisions made at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly?
- Have the changes affected your faith life, either individually or with your congregation? If so, how?
- How do others in your congregation feel about the policy changes?

## General Conversational Guidelines

There is no particular script for these contacts, but here are some general guidelines:

- Express your care and concern for the other, listening to their stories of hurt or celebration
- Tell your own story about why you are thankful for the policy changes and what they mean for the future of the church.
  - For those who are feeling angry or hurt because of the policy changes, don't try to convince them they are wrong or try to somehow apologize for the Churchwide decisions. Instead, simply share what you feel and believe.
  - Be ready to provide clarity, as needed, about what the actions of the CWA mean and don't mean (see links to "[Additional Resources](#)" below). If you don't know the answer to a question, don't worry. Just contact us and we'll try to help find an answer, which you can bring back to the person you contacted.
  - Express your commitment to living together faithfully in the ELCA.
  - Depending on whom you are talking to and the individual circumstances, you may wish to say a few words about the Reconciling in Christ program.
  - One of the simplest, yet most powerful ways to express your faith and convictions to another is to share your favorite Bible verse. Choose a passage or story that has particular meaning for you in your faith life. Incorporate that scriptural passage as you tell your story about why you are committed to the full inclusion of all people.

## Report Back

Afterwards, please report back to LC/NA ( [admin@lcna.org](mailto:admin@lcna.org) ) and let us know how many people you contacted and the type of relationship you have with them. Without mentioning names, please comment on how the conversation went: what were the joys and concerns you heard? What needs to happen for reconciliation to take root?

## Additional Resources

1. [FAQs Regarding the Human Sexuality Decisions of the ELCA](#) , Bp Martin Wells. Helpful answers to common questions regarding decisions made at the 2009 CWA.
2. [CWA 2009 Revised Social Statement HSGT Final](#) . Text of the social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* , adopted by the 2009 CWA.
3. [CWA votes on Ministry Policy resolutions](#) . Report of language on ministry policies adopted by the 2009 CWA. PDF format. Includes vote tallies.
4. [The Way It Looks from Here](#) — Bp Rogness. Comments from Bishop Peter Rogness (St. Paul Area Synod) post CWA09. This 3-part E-letter includes: "The Heart of the Decision: Doing a Peculiarly Lutheran Thing," "Scripture as Authority: Can't the Bible Just Settle This?" and "Registering Dissent."
5. [Reflections on the CWA and the Bible](#) — Wengert. Comments about scriptural appropriateness of the CWA09's decisions, Professor Timothy Wengert of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. Published in the September 2009 *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* .
6. [FAQs on Bound Conscience](#) — ELCA. ELCA's answers to frequently asked questions about the concept of "bound conscience."

